



Position Statement: Licensure of Naturopathic Physicians

Licensed and licensable naturopathic physicians are graduates of 4-year, post-graduate medical degree programs accredited through entities recognized by the US Department of Education. These programs provide robust training in natural medicine and treatment protocols. The treatment approaches learned by the naturopathic doctors (NDs) emphasize the importance of identifying and treating the root causes of chronic illness, the necessity of preventive care, and the value of proactive patient self-care. **Licensed and licensable NDs work in tandem with other health care professionals and, as specialists in preventing and resolving chronic illness, constitute a critical component of a comprehensive healthcare system.**

The AANP advocates licensure of NDs in all 50 states, as regulation provides transparency and protects public health. Licensure of NDs enables patients and medical professionals to distinguish between qualified naturopathic physicians and “traditional naturopaths” who have little formal training. It also provides a legal framework for NDs to practice medicine in accordance with their training, skills, and expertise.

Founded in 1985, the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) is the national professional society representing licensed and licensable naturopathic physicians. The AANP’s members are students and graduates of 4-year, graduate-level naturopathic medical schools accredited by the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education. CNME is recognized by the US Department of Education as the national accrediting agency for programs leading to the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (ND or NMD) or Doctor of Naturopathy (ND) degree.

Naturopathic medicine combines centuries-old, natural, non-toxic therapies with current advances in medicine and covers all aspects of health, from prenatal to geriatric care. Naturopathic medicine focuses on the root causes of illness, rather than merely treating the symptoms, and tailors treatment to individual patients – emphasizing their education and self-care, empowering them to overcome the habits that can lead to chronic disease. NDs are qualified to prescribe medications, under appropriate circumstances, and are trained to make referrals to medical specialists as needed. NDs do not displace other healthcare professionals; rather, they work collaboratively with MDs and other providers to provide patients with safe, effective, and cost-effective health care.

Many patients, especially those with chronic health conditions that do not respond to conventional treatment, can and do benefit from naturopathic care. Through nutritional and lifestyle counseling, as well as the judicious use of supplements, NDs add a vital dimension to patient care. Naturopathic doctors benefit the public health by providing expertise in the areas of dietary supplement safety and efficacy, drug/herb/nutrient interactions, and the appropriate use of evidence-based complementary and integrative therapies. NDs also have a superb record of safety and effectiveness in the 20 states and territories in which they are currently regulated.

Regulating the practice of naturopathic medicine protects the public from misinformation about natural remedies that is ubiquitous on the internet, in the media, in health food stores, and from practitioners who have little formal training. It enhances patient choice, promotes patient self-care, and provides greater access to care.