

The Use of Naturopathy as Adjuvant to Traditional Medicine

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Abstract: Alternative medicines have long offered opportunities for patients and doctors to treat illness. While many doctors and patients are uncomfortable with alternative medicines the use of non-traditional therapies has never been more popular. Being uncomfortable with alternative medicines can result from traditional doctors receiving little training in those fields and that patients have a difficult time finding quantifiable data on treatments resulting from the lack of funding for research into these fields¹. Naturopathic medicine is one of the many forms of alternative medicine. It is a distinct primary care profession that focusses on several principles in order to care for patients. Naturopathic medicine should be promoted as an adjuvant therapy but not as a true *replacement* to modern medicine.

BENEFITS OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Naturopathic medicine should be promoted for adjuvant use due to the benefits to patients that result from its main principles. The principles of naturopathic medicine are the healing power of nature, identifying and treating the causes of illness, not harming patients, doctors being a teacher to patients, treating the whole person, and finally prevention. The principles of naturopathy ensure that patients are actually healed and not harmed in the healing process, major reasons to promote its use. By using the inherent healing abilities of the body as the main tool naturopathic doctors facilitate the body to heal itself as opposed to forcing a cure into a patient's system^{2,3}. Using a "do no harm" approach is key in this process. Making every effort to use non-invasive or treatments that induce minimal side effects is key to naturopathic doctors^{2,3}. This effort, combined with the use of the body's healing ability result in a more desirable and enhanced healing than one attained through a more traditional avenue. Another reason naturopathy should be promoted is its principles detailing the prevention and treatment of the causes of illness. As opposed to simply suppressing the symptoms of illness as some traditional therapies do naturopathy aims to remove the causes of the symptoms^{2,3}. This leads into the principle of prevention. Naturopathic doctors identify and assess risk factors of their patients and make decisions with them in order to mitigate risks and avoid illness^{2,3}. Treating the causes of illness and doctors having a relationship with their patients to prevent illness as opposed to only seeing patients when treatments are needed offers a marked

improvement over traditional medicine. Some patients also feel more comfortable with alternative medicine after losing faith in traditional practices. Most patients do not see traditional medicine as ineffective but as a result of a bad experience or disenchantment with it seek another option. This is a further reason to support the use of naturopathic medicine as an adjuvant therapy due to it giving patients more options⁴. The last major reason that naturopathic medicine should be offered to patients is the placebo effect. If patients believe in the treatments that they are receiving they are much more likely to positively react to them^{5,6}. In offering naturopathic medicine as an additive treatment doctors give patients another treatment to believe in which can positively contribute to the healing process. Naturopathic medicine should be offered as an adjuvant therapy due to the benefits its principles provide to patients, some patients not completely trusting traditional medicines, and that if patients believe in the treatment provided it will have a positive impact on their healing.

SUPPORT FOR ADJUVANT USE AS OPPOSED TO REPLACEMENT

Naturopathic medicine should not be pushed as a replacement for more mainstream forms of medicine due to the continuing advancements in drugs and technology that continue to improve patient care, diagnosis and recovery. The continued application of better technology to medicine improves the ability of doctors to analyze information, improves treatments, and enhances patient history records. New medical databases can now predict medical trends accurately,

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a substantial improvement over the more reactionary procedures of the past^{7, 8, 9}. Technological advances have also made treatments more effective with less patient suffering. New highly effective treatments facilitate patient healing like never before and are continually improved due to the increased research capabilities resulting from better technology^{7, 8, 9}. Better record keeping also enables doctors to better serve their patients. Treatment histories and results are now easily accessible, allowing doctors to compare current symptoms and ailments to past occurrences and target them accordingly^{7, 8, 9}. Perhaps the biggest impact of technology in medicine is the introduction of new drugs. New drugs continually improve patient recovery and quality of life, and for some diseases, like cancer, are important steps on the road to a cure. Several new melanoma drugs approved in 2014 have shown significant improvements over previous options with tumor shrinkage in 20%-40% of patients who had not seen results with other drugs with shrinkage lasting more than six months in 5%-10% of patients¹⁰. These new drugs' encouraging results are a major reason that traditional medicine should persist as the primary form of patient care. Traditional forms of medicine should continue to be the primary form of treatment offered to patients due to the role that technology plays in continually improving treatments and the patient experience.

CONCLUSIONS

Modern medicine should be supported with the adjuvant use of naturopathic medicine. Between the benefits offered in patient health and recovery and the ability of doctors to supplement existing treatments naturopathic medicine offers many benefits to the medical system. These benefits however, do not outweigh the benefits of modern medicine to an extent that encourages replacement. The application of technological advancements to modern medical practices and treatments reinforce its position as the primary form of care for patients now and in the future.

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