

# Your Health

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## SCOPE OF PRACTICE IN PERSPECTIVE

### PATIENTS, PRESS & POLITICIANS WEIGH IN ON PROPOSED REGS

The country, but particularly Ontario, has been overwhelmed with the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) scare. Is it the most important health topic or is press exaggerated and out of proportion with other health issues? Every day newspaper editorials and letters to the editor weigh in on both sides. But one aspect that seems to be missing is how complementary medicine can boost an individual's immune system and be used alongside, in collaboration with standard drug treatments. In this issue of Your Health we have a two-page profile on SARS and naturopathic medicine.

As Dr. Lemmo, a naturopathic physician practicing in Vancouver, writes in the SARS article, "patients with SARS in hospital care are given various intravenous antibiotics in the hopes of finding some sort of positive effect and at the same time making sure that a bacterial cause of pneumonia is not masking as SARS. However intravenous antibiotics do *nothing* for viral infections. In addition, patients may receive experimental treatments of a few anti-viral drugs (e.g., ribavirin)." No standard treatments include aggressive complementary medicine. Unfortunately.

While SARS has flooded the national media, a flurry of scope activity has characterized the last quarter for naturopathic medicine in BC. Thanks to the thousands who wrote to the premier with their concerns on scope

issues, thanks to all those who copied their correspondence to the BCNA, thanks to the many thousands who have signed petitions in doctors offices, and thanks to all those who've spoken to family, friends and colleagues on this very important issue.

We are hoping to work with the government in the coming months as they fine-tune scope regulations for possible passage in the fall 2003 parliamentary sitting. Our ability to work with the government, and their awareness of how important this issue is to patients across the province, is directly linked to the public input and concerns raised.

In this issue we've reprinted press clippings and excerpts from copied letters. Obviously, due to space constraints, we've only been able to reprint a small sample, but again, thanks to all the copies received.

In regard to correspondence, we've reprinted the form letters the premier and ministry of health are sending to patients. Minister Hawkins speaks of patient safety in comments published in a Kelowna paper. But as BCNA President Dr. Garrett Swetlikoff writes in response, "The public should be circumspect at the minister's suggestion that 'harmful procedures' are being delivered. This statement has not been supported by any statistics or clinical evidence. Such procedures would not be condoned by the profession who undergo extensive

training, including a minimum three years of pre-medical training, followed by four years of clinical training at accredited naturopathic medical schools, in addition to the stringent licencing exams in this province."

We've also included recent health statistics on access, interest in and use of complementary medicine. Happy Spring!

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### **Preventive health care threatened by new model for medical professionals**

To the editor:

I would like to respond to the letter to your readers by Sindi Hawkins, Minister of Health Planning, in the Capital News, March 28, 2003, headed "Hawkins says public safety government's first priority."

The minister is accurate in addressing the enormous public demand for science-based natural alternatives to invasive drug and surgical therapies in health care. Today, hundreds of thousands of British Columbians choose to seek primary health care services from licenced naturopathic physicians (NDs).

However, the profession, through the British Columbia Naturopathic Association (BCNA), does not agree with her assessment that these proposed changes support continued freedom of choice. "Safe Choices: A New Model for Regulating Health Care Professions in British Columbia" will destroy the current and traditional practice of naturopathic medicine in B.C. as well as limit doctor access for existing and future patients in this province. These changes will foster an environment of unregulated complementary health practices leading to increased public safety issues.

The minister also pointed to the six-year study of the Health Professions Council (HPC). The BCNA actively participated in this lengthy process—unfortunately, much of the information provided to the HPC was either disregarded or omitted from the final report.

In addition, the BCNA has serious concerns about the disparity between the preliminary report and the final report found in Safe Choices. Documents between the naturopathic profession and the HPC do not provide any rationale for these differences. These changes are a radical departure from what naturopathic medicine has been and is, the impact of which will restrict therapies that have been delivered safely and effectively since the profession was licenced in 1921.

While the minister talks of quality health care services, she ignores the fact that most jurisdictions are moving toward an integrated system of health care that encourages complementary medicine. Meanwhile, this government has chosen to attack the gatekeepers of preventative health care: naturopathic physicians. It's important to note that the government does not financially support naturopathic medicine and NDs place no fiscal burden on MSP.

The public should be circumspect at the minister's suggestion that "harmful procedures" are being delivered. This statement has not been supported by any statistics or clinical evidence. Such procedures would not be condoned by the profession who undergo extensive training, including a minimum three years of pre-medical training, followed by four years of clinical training at accredited naturopathic medical schools, in addition to the stringent licencing exams in this province. Furthermore, once licenced NDs undergo mandatory continuing medical education.

The BCNA is circulating a province-wide petition asking the government to bring forward a scope for naturopathic physicians that reflects the longstanding safety record of naturopathic medical care as well as the historic and current reality of naturopathic medical practice in B.C.

Dr. Garrett Swetlikoff, ND, BCNA President  
from the Kelowna Capital News, April 16, 2003

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Dear Premier,

*I write after hearing news today of your government's desire to limit the scope of practice of naturopathic doctors in this province. I voice my opposition to this in light of Ray Romanow's recent report and recommendations on changing how healthcare is delivered in this country. Primary care reform, if you recall, was one of the areas needing a drastic overhaul. Naturopathic doctors must be allowed to continue their current practices in order that we, the public, are not forced to depend on the abysmal care some of us (especially those with chronic illnesses who so desperately are becoming fed up with the lack of a holistic perspective by current MDs who treat only on small part at a time, allow only one complaint per visit, do not even discuss diet/exercise with a patient, the latter of which would alleviate most of the debilitating symptoms presented) receive. This is a giant step backward your government is taking for not only are you denying a highly valued service to the people of British Columbia, but also putting an onerous burden on the current medical system which has never been a cost effective approach given the piecemeal approach the primary care physicians supply. Naturopathic medicine is very cost effective and if curtailed in its scope of practice would only overburden an already overburdened health care system.*

*E. Schneider, Sooke, copied to the BCNA*

BCNA members say they are upset over a proposed plan to reduce the scope of practice by naturopathic physicians.

Jim Hart, government relations consultant for the association, said the BC government is preparing to reduce the scope of practice for naturopathic physicians based on a government document called Safe Choices, a new for regulating health professions in BC.

Health Professional [sic] Council, 'represents a huge backwards step for naturopathic medicine and health care in BC,' said Dr. Garrett Swetlikoff, ND, and president of the BCNA. 'The proposed changes will only serve to limit access...for patients seeking complementary medical care from qualified professionals.'

The changes will effectively prevent naturopathic doctors from practicing in a profession for which they have received extensive training, and which takes pressure off the regular health system.

...In a move to protect their profession, the BCNA is circulating a petition requesting the government to reject the Safe Choices recommendation[s], and are asking the public to sign the petition available at naturopathic offices [and online at [www.bcna.ca](http://www.bcna.ca)]

# Plan angers naturopaths

by BEERNICE TRICK  
Citizen staff  
B.C. Naturopathic Association (BCNA) members say they are upset over a proposed plan to reduce the scope of practice by naturopathic physicians.  
Jim Hart, government relations con-

said Dr. Garrett Swetlikoff, ND (naturopathic doctor) and president of the BCNA. "The proposed changes will only serve to limit access ... for patients seeking complementary medical care from qualified professionals."  
The changes will effectively prevent

model

Safe Choices, a recommendation by the

excerpted from the Prince George Citizen, March 18, 2003

Dear Premier,

The solution to the problem of an unsustainable health care system is NOT to cut back on the scope of naturopathic medicine. A field that gets and keeps people healthy by supporting the body's natural healing process should be supported with all the resources we can muster.

I have used naturopathic medicine to deal with a health issue that traditional medicine could not resolve. It was not a faith healing, but a last resort. Since then, I have used naturopathy whenever I can afford it.

I have tested high for cholesterol for several years. My family physician only uses drugs as a last resort, but since healthy eating and regular exercises did not lower my count, he suggested I use medication. My research showed that the medication used to lower cholesterol is hard on the liver. So, doesn't it make sense to improve the liver functioning? This would deal with the cholesterol problem, along with improving one's overall health.

With the help of my naturopathic physician, this 63 year old woman now has a normal cholesterol count and the blood pressure of a 20 year old. If I had taken the medication my doctor prescribed, it would be covered by Pharmacare. But I had to get healthy with money out of my own pocket.

Massive funds are going into high-tech ways to repair the damage of unhealthy living, while those of us who try to maintain our health must use our own resources. We have the technology to measure the effectiveness of all government programs. Let's use it, and fund effective, accountable programs. Reward responsibility!

S. Le, Vancouver, copied to the BCNA

Dear Premier,

In Europe I always went to see a naturopathic doctor if something seemed to be wrong with me. So when I immigrated to Beautiful British Columbia, it was a great joy to find naturopathic doctors here as well. But now, to my disbelief, I just learned that the government doesn't allow our ND to have access to medical Labs and X-rays or to prescribe medication. What is wrong with the healthcare system here? As a patient, it seems that I have to see two doctors, just to have one who can prescribe medicine! I would very much appreciate if you could explain why licenced naturopathic physicians are not equally accepted in the healthcare system. Looking forward to receiving your response. Thank you.

R. Rupp, Enderby, copied to the BCNA



Find the names and addresses of MLAs in BC at: <http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm>



# Naturopaths fight gov't

■ Victoria will be making a mistake if it limits naturopathic scope of practice, group claims

By LAURENA TYPUSIAK  
Special to the Herald

PENTICTON — Jim Hart is determined to jam the spokes of a movement that he thinks could put naturopathic physicians out of business.

A former parliamentarian, Hart — who has been hired to represent the British Columbia Naturopathic Association (BCNA) — said the British Columbia government will be making a mistake if it follows recommendations that significantly limit naturopathic scope of practice.

"These are 180 qualified doctors that have spent years of pre-medical training — the same as a medical doctor spends — plus an additional four years in naturopathic training at university, and they're about to be basically cut from our health-care system unless we do something about it," said Hart.

The restrictions are the result of a six-year process to establish an umbrella set of regulations for 15 health-care professions, from dietitians to chiropractors, in the interest of public safety.

But the final report, titled Safe Choices: A New Model for Regulating

Health Professions in British Columbia, recommends limiting treatments and modalities that naturopathic doctors have been using for over a century, and that is a problem for the doctors and their patients.

For example, said Hart, if the new regulations are adopted, naturopathic physicians will be limited in their abilities to diagnose and treat allergies, perform full physical exams including pap smears, or to perform full spinal adjustments even if the physician has a chiropractic degree.

Glenn Cassie, the executive director of the BCNA explains they will still be allowed to use some of the techniques, but not to the same extent.

"They'll give us some laboratory testing, but not all the laboratory testing. Some manipulation, but not all of the manipulations. Some allergy testing, but not all of the allergy testing," said Cassie, pointing out that since some people use naturopathic doctors as their primary care providers they need to be able to have the tools to provide that primary care.

And some of these procedures — like allergy testing — are the cornerstones of the profession, said Cassie.

"Naturopathic doctors have been treating allergies longer than medical doctors have believed in them," he said.

Cassie is baffled by the whole situation. For one thing, naturopathic med-

icine puts no fiscal burden on the government, since it is a pay-as-you-go service. In fact, the changes may put extra burden on our already strained health-care system as many patients will have to return to using MSP-funded physicians.

And Hart pointed out the government talks time and time again about how important preventative medicine is in the current health-care crisis.

"Well guess what? Naturopathic physicians are the gate-keepers of preventative medicine," he said.

Though she refused to respond to a request for an interview, Sindi Hawkins, minister of health planning, communicated via letter dated March 21, 2003. "The final report did raise concerns about a small number of potentially harmful procedures that some naturopathic physicians are currently providing."

But Cassie insists that naturopathic care has a sterling safety record. Though adverse drug reactions are one of the highest causes of death in the United States, said Cassie, there are virtually no deaths from naturopathic treatment.

Hart said parts of the report are based on claims — from other professions — that naturopathic doctors aren't properly trained to safely perform some of the techniques. For example, there are claims that naturopaths are prescribing food diets with-

out the proper training.

Hart insists that this is not the case, since naturopathic physicians receive 1,825 hours of nutrition training, compared to 1,172 for a registered dietitian and 369 for a medical doctor.

In her letter of March 21, Hawkins wrote the Safe Choices report is only a recommendation at this point, and the final decision has not been made.

Yet in a February letter to Garrett Swedlikoff, BCNA president, Hawkins wrote: "... it is my intention that the council's recommendations be adopted and guide the changes to the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation."

She also writes there is a three-month window for comment before any changes will come into force — but Hart said he is under the impression the decision has essentially been made.

"I talked to the Ministry of Health earlier in the week and they told me ... they're really not talking to too many people because they're actually in the process of writing the recommendations now," he said.

Hart, the naturopathic doctors of B.C. and their patients are spearheading a petition and letter-writing campaign in hopes of derailing the planned changes before they are implemented.

Penticton-Okanagan Valley MLA Bill Barisoff was approached to comment on the changes to the rules regarding naturopath doctors, but he declined an interview.

## Comment from the Premier

*Concerned taxpayers writing to the BC Premier on this issue are receiving a form letter response, regardless of the content in their correspondence. The text of the premier's letter is as follows:*

Thank you for your letter regarding the services delivered by naturopathic physicians. I know that many people who regard naturopathic treatment as vital to their well-being, have written to government expressing concern about information they have received regarding the future of naturopathy in British Columbia.

I can assure you that this government's top priority is saving and renewing our public health care system to ensure that British Columbians have access to high-quality, patient-centered care. Reaching that goal depends on redesigning the health care system in order to achieve better health outcomes and the greatest possible value for every health care dollar.

I appreciate the time you have taken to share your thoughts and concerns with me. I have forwarded your letter to the Honourable Sindi Hawkins, Minister of Health Planning, so that she, too, has the opportunity to review your thoughts. I am certain she will include them in ongoing discussion on this issue.

Sincerely,  
Gordon Campbell, Premier

## Freedom to choose care is under threat By Trevor Salloum, ND

Interest in alternative medicine is growing rapidly. In fact, in the last few years the number of naturopathic physicians in B.C. has more than doubled. BC now has the newest Naturopathic Medical school in North America. The Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine (BINM) in New Westminster is now poised to accept new students and take the increased demand for NDs off the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine in Toronto, which is currently the largest naturopathic school in the world.

In recognizing the importance of alternative medicine, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States now helps fund research at some of the naturopathic colleges. In the last 15 years, numerous studies have shown a scientific basis for naturopathic medicine including botanical medicine, homeopathy, physical medicine and nutrition.

Naturopathic medicine has always emphasized the importance of prevention and the patients' right to make informed choices in all aspects of health care. The B.C. government is proposing changes to the naturopathic scope of practice as outlined in "Safe Choices: A New Model for Regulating Health Professions in British Columbia." If implemented, these changes will seriously reduce patients' access to numerous procedures routinely and safely used by naturopathic physicians. In addition, it will reduce health options and choices for B.C. residents. Patients who choose complementary/alternative medicine will lose access to physicians who receive extensive training in preventive medicine. The naturopathic approach further reduces health care costs by helping patients avoid drugs and surgery.

Ironically Safe Choices actually reduces safety by restricting substances and services of naturopathic doctors, but allowing those untrained or unlicensed to use the same. Naturopathic doctors have been providing safe and effective health care to B.C. residents for over a century. (To read a copy of Safe Choices see [www.healthplanning.gov.bc.ca/leg/hpc/review/part-i/update-naturopath.html](http://www.healthplanning.gov.bc.ca/leg/hpc/review/part-i/update-naturopath.html))

Residents of British Columbia may want to ask their MLA why the Liberals are attempting to restrict a health care profession which does not burden MSP, whose safety is impeccable and is in high demand by the public.

This article originally appeared in the Kelowna Capital News on March 10, 2003. It is reprinted here with permission from the author. Dr. Trevor Salloum practices in Kelowna. Contact him at 250/763-5445.



*Dear Premier,*

*I am extremely annoyed by the refusal by the medical and pharmaceutical industry to even try holistic methods. I am living proof. Surely the government can come up with regulations assuring naturopathic, well trained individuals to practice a proven health benefit!*

*F. Shannon, Penticton, copied to the BCNA*

*Dear Premier,*

*I have a condition which the regular medical profession is unable to help, they did try, it did not work.*

*It started six years ago, stumbling, at times using a wheelchair, worst of all using catheters. Then I met a naturopath and everything changed. The treatment is based on a diet change, lifestyle change, and legal supplements. This is common in Europe, the US, and needs to be accepted here. The wheelchair is long since gone, and I built a fire and the catheters went up in smoke. My MD is impressed with my improvement, and has no difficulty that I see a naturopath.*

*Naturopaths have eight years or more of college training, they are licenced professionals. We pay money to the MSP, and by choice we pay the naturopath. If I cannot continue with this treatment my condition will worsen, back to the catheters and the wheelchair. I will become a drain on the MSP.*

*Do we not have freedom of choice in B.C., to see a doctor or naturopath as we wish? And the right to buy legal supplements as we wish? I would appreciate a reply.*

*P. Ross, Langley, copied to the BCNA*

# Naturopathic Medicine Week about awareness

Naturopathic Medicine Week, March 22-29, is more important than ever, say organizers, as they face incapacitation from the provincial government.

The week hopes to raise awareness about the services naturopathic doctors (NDs) provide through seminars, workshops and events. Three local NDs will offer free consultations and basic testing to patients.

Naturopathic medicine has many options for dealing with common and chronic conditions.

NDs receive a minimum of three years of pre-medical training followed by four years of post-

graduate training at an accredited naturopathic school. They specialize in health risks including diet, exercise and stress and use dietary, herbal and natural substances to encourage wellness.

Local NDs will give free lectures at the Lakeside Resort about hormones and their various interactions from 7-9 p.m., March 24.

To learn more about NDs visit [www.bcna.ca](http://www.bcna.ca) or call 1-800-277-1128. To arrange a free consultation or tests during Naturopathic Medicine Week call Dr. Johnson at 490-4755, Dr. Ure at 493-6060 or drop-in at Dr. Mackenzie's March 26. Call 492-2345.

Not all the press was confrontational this quarter! NDs across the province also celebrated naturopathic medicine week. Public seminars, community events and free medical testing were just some of the activities planned by doctors in communities from Prince George to Nelson to Campbell River. Naturopathic Medicine week is an annual national event—an opportunity for new, and existing patients, to (re)discover the benefits of complementary health care and the services provided by doctors in their area.

Scope of practice updates and press releases are archived at [www.bcna.ca](http://www.bcna.ca) under the "What's New" tab. Issues of Your Health are also archived at [bcna.ca](http://bcna.ca)

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## Alternative medicine at risk

By Darah Hansen

From the Richmond News, Saturday, March 15, 2003

Martin Kwok has been practicing alternative medicine in Richmond for five years now, but he wonders if he'll still be here in another five.

Pending legislation by the B.C. Liberal government imposing controls on what he can and can't do as a naturopathic doctor threatens to make his work near impossible, he said.

"We're fighting for our livelihood. We're fighting for our patients," Kwok said of the professional turf war he and his association, the B.C. Naturopathic Association, have found themselves in recently.

The actual battleground was drawn last year with the publication of proposed changes to the Health Professions Act, the legislation which governs as many as 15 professions in the province from naturopaths to nutritionists.

Put together by a special council appointed under the NDP back in mid-1990s, the proposed changes are designed to make clear the scope of practice each profession can operate under in the province. It would also streamline any necessary review process.

Tara Wilson, Ministry of Health spokeswoman, said reaction to the legislation is premature—nothing has been decided yet.

She said the government will be relying on the council's report when drafting their legislation. However, other factors and opinions may come into play.

"(The proposed changes) were only going to be used as the basis for legislation," Wilson said. "The council report is not the be all and end all."

Kwok said the report goes too far in restricting his profession, particularly in the realm of diagnosis.

He said if some of the recommendations are approved—including restricting naturopaths from conducting "invasive" physical exams such as rectal, prostate or cervical exams, and limiting access to laboratories for blood tests and urine analysis—it will impede their ability to properly determine what is wrong with a patient.

"If you don't do these tests, how can you diagnose a patient?" he asked.

Other alternative healthcare providers may also have a stake in limiting naturopaths, Kwok said, because of the potential crossover in services like diet advice or acupuncture.

Registered in B.C. since 1921, naturopathic medicine is designed to treat the cause of a disease, rather than just manage its symptoms. Long-term health goals are achieved through a combination of herbal remedies, alternative health treatments, diet adjustments and lifestyle changes.

Dear Premier,

It is with the utmost concern that I am writing to you about the proposed actions of the Honourable Sindi Hawkins, Minister of Health Planning. The minister is planning to implement radical changes to the past and current scope of naturopathic medicine in BC: She is planning to act on the Health Professions Council (HPC) final report for naturopathic physicians—despite the fact that this final report differs dramatically from the preliminary report and is rife with inaccuracies and oversights. Worse, the final report does not acknowledge and/or omits a substantial body of factual evidence provided to the HPC regarding ND's scope.

The preliminary report, although not perfect, was at least progressive. It recommended laboratory access, referrals to medical specialists and hospital privileges, among other things. The final report eliminated all those progressive elements solely, it seems, on negative recommendations from the BCDNA (a practitioner group with virtually no background or expertise in naturopathic medicine), and correspondence from the BCMA.

The proposed model for health professions in BC is supposed to be a "shared scopes" model. Instead, we are constantly under attack from other health professions for partisan and unfounded reasons. This is not the health care process I imagined under your government. If you remember, I was involved in health dialogues that were part of your campaign before your successful election. I was excited by your beliefs and proposed changes—and after talks with the Honourable Colin Hansen, it seemed that naturopathic medicine would finally receive its due: An opportunity to serve the people of BC to its full potential. I did my best to help promote you to my colleagues and to my patients. I believed that under your leadership we would have a much better health care delivery system and that naturopathic medicine would play a greater role in the delivery of safe, effective, cost-effective health care in this province.

I find that what's occurred is the exact opposite to my expectations. All government funding for NDs has basically been removed. Taxpayer MSP rates have doubled and MDs have been given pretty much everything they wanted. Worse, one of your health ministers, Ms. Hawkins, is prepared to act on a limiting and narrow vision of what naturopathic medicine is by using the HPC's final report in "Safe Choices." This is in direct contradiction to the public interest. If she, on behalf of your government, is intent to destroy the naturopathic profession in this province, she is well on her way.

In the past four years of meeting with and listening to Ms. Hawkins, I have never seen nor heard any positive feedback in regard to this profession. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Perhaps, since she has been trained as a nurse, her professional background is clouding her judgment. Regardless, her proposed changes are not in the best interests of the patients in this province. While other jurisdictions, such as the US and Europe, are moving towards health care paradigms which embrace and support naturopathic medicine, BC seems to be going in the opposite direction. The expertise of NDs is being sought after: NDs are working in many cancer hospitals in the US; the National Institutes of Health has NDs on their board; many HMOs have included naturopathic medicine in their programs, etc.

The Federal Minister of Health, the Honourable Anne McLellan has stated that "The Canadian Naturopathic Association and Naturopathic medicine approaches appear well placed to play an important role in advancing healthy living strategies, preventing illness and improving health.

We need your health ministry to: Help foster better relations with the BCMA and its college; Meet with us; Help promote naturopathic medicine to the public, which would encourage people to take responsibility for their health; Allow NDs to practice to their full extent of medical training; Give NDs access to provincial medical laboratories, referrals to medical specialists and access to ND patients in hospitals; Allow NDs to expand their scope of practice with appropriate post-graduate education and training.

I would appreciate your attention to this serious matter.

Respectfully, Dr. Robert Van Horlick, ND,  
Prince George, copied to the BCNA

Dear Premier,

It is my understanding that your Government intends to restrict the level of services provided by my Naturopathic Physician. I know I need not remind you that Naturopathic Physicians are equally qualified vis-à-vis the allopathic counterparts to provide these services. Furthermore, I am confident that I need not remind you that our Health Care System, as it presently exists, is, in effect, a reactive system while Naturopathic Physicians provide a broad range of preventative services.

I am opposed to the imposition of restrictions on my ability to choose medical services for myself and my family.

When this Bill is raised in the Legislature, how will you vote?

B. Shumborski, Surrey, copied to the BCNA

Dear Premier,

Personally, I have used naturopathic medical services for a number of years, and I plan to continue to do so. This does not mean I have abandoned my regular doctor, nor that I cast any aspersions on his practice. What it does mean is that I have chosen to be proactive about my own health, and have used the service of my naturopath to prevent a wide range of health complaints from getting worse. My naturopath, Dr. Posen, originally practiced as a chiropractor, and it was in this capacity that I first received health support from him. Since beginning to practice as a naturopath, he has been able, by using treatment options that were not available to him under the chiropractic licence, to help me far more. Below is a partial list of the health benefits I have been able to achieve with my naturopath's help and care, going back to the mid-eighties, when I turned to him to help me with problems mainstream medicine had no answer for.

It is astonishing to me to think that your government, without consultation, and for no apparent reason (could there be hidden reasons, one cannot help but wonder?) would even think about interfering in the practice of a profession about which, as laymen, they know little or nothing. This is extremely arrogant and disrespectful of these doctors and their patients, to say the least.

Substances that naturopaths prescribe or recommend are also being targeted. Why??? It would be ludicrous to claim that the issue is one of public safety. Who has been threatened, who harmed? Naturopathy is minimalist, non-invasive, and not dangerous! Statistics suggesting that any of the targeted methodologies or substances are in any way dangerous simply are not there, and neither are the shocking news stories.

Could this uncalled for attack on naturopathy be a misguided attempt to buy back favour from the doctors? After all, along with the legal profession, British Columbia's doctors were among the first professional groups alienated by Liberal policies when you first came to power. If that is so, Mr Colin Hansen should rest assured that the facts will come out. The "royal" status of the Liberals is, after all, temporary: British Columbia remains part of a democracy. Concerned citizens who chose naturopathic care must and will look beyond the obvious answers to try to understand the forces at play behind this attempt to suppress our freedom of choice in medical care.

## PATIENTS SPEAK OUT

Dear Premier,

Suffice it to say that although naturopathic doctors are licenced primary care physicians in BC who provide standard diagnostic testing, your government is failing its citizens by making it more and more difficult for them to practice naturopathic medicine, and for us to tap in on their good services. So I ask, why is your government so slow in recognizing naturopathic doctors are primary health care professionals? Why do I have to pay double for health care? Why do you make it impossible for [NDs] to have access to diagnostic clinics such as blood and x-ray testing? Why can't our naturopathic doctors give prescriptions that meet our health needs? My allopathic doctor doesn't have these road blocks.

More and more citizens are utilizing naturopathic medicine because it is safer, non-invasive, respects the body's natural healing potential, and it has proven success. This move towards naturopathic and other non-allopathic modalities of health should indicate to you the political will of the people.

I. Poelzer, Salmon Arm, copied to the BCNA

C. Tupar, Surrey, copied to the BCNA

Dear Premier,

I am a consumer of naturopathic and chiropractic health care, and have been for 15 years. As I've moved from city to city, I have always found a naturopath to serve as my primary health care provider. So I feel very threatened and angry about the changes proposed by "Safe Choices." I want my doctors to have full and unhindered access to all the tools possible. And I want other British Columbians to have access to these care opportunities if they choose.

I need you to consider where the voices of concern about alternative health care are coming from; they are certainly not coming from patients or their families. Conventional doctors aren't usually familiar with philosophies or practices of alternative practitioners. And they aren't often exposed to the daily success stories of people who see alternative care givers. Following my successful treatment by a naturopath, I've never been back to a GP to say, "Look, I've fully recovered." My friends who have returned to their GP's have been treated with incredulity, criticism, told they were "lucky" — a variety of responses other than respect and good wishes.

In the last 15 years, the care I have received has spared me from surgery, prescriptions, and lengthy illness. I have paid for the bulk of these services myself because they worked for me and they saved me from a lot of unnecessary pain. Incidentally, they saved the healthcare system a great deal of money.

...The growing demand for alternative health care is evidence that this system is working. I beg you to be supportive.

C. Clark, Penticton, copied to the BCNA

# SARS: A Naturopathic Medical Perspective

## By Walter Lemmo, ND

As the entire world attempts to both explain and contain the virus (or viruses) which is responsible for SARS, it may be an important time to explore helpful preventive and more aggressive immune supportive strategies using complementary and alternative medical care.

Currently, there is **no** known treatment for SARS (which stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). The predominant view is that SARS is caused by the coronavirus family. Viruses, for the most part, can be quite difficult to treat for the medical community because there are no broad spectrum drugs that may kill viruses as there are for bacteria. Contrary to what most people believe, antibiotics can do absolutely **nothing** for either preventing or treating SARS—if SARS is in fact a virus. Generally, antibiotics will kill or slow **only** bacteria and bacteria-like agents. Remember that viruses are much different creatures than bacteria. This difference is why each year there is a brand new flu shot developed, rather than a single strain the way there is for polio or meningitis. You may now understand why there is a strong push to find newer and better drugs for helping to control some of the more common viral infections (e.g., HIV, hepatitis B & C, herpes viruses, etc.).

It should not be difficult to understand why people who are suspected of having SARS need to be quarantined for several weeks or more. Avoiding or minimizing contact from a suspected SARS patient is by far the best approach for not catching SARS. Wearing masks, gloves, eye goggles, and keeping good hygiene (e.g., washing hands) are general recommended precautions for reducing a person's risk of possible infection from people with SARS.

Patients with SARS in hospital care are given various intravenous antibiotics in the hopes of finding some sort of positive effect and at the same time making sure that a bacterial cause of pneumonia is not masking as SARS. Again, let me stress that intravenous antibiotics do **nothing** for viral infections. In addition, patients may receive experimental treatments of a few anti-viral drugs too (e.g., ribavirin).

But what about the aggressive application of complementary and alternative medical treatments? How about boosting a person's immune system to help make it strong enough to fight off potential infections? How about supporting the body's inherent immune capacities to help minimize the complications from SARS?

Complementary and alternative medicines which support the immune system include both the oral and intravenous applications of nutritional, botanical, and homeopathic medicines, as well as other adjunctive care. For example, let's examine using good old vitamin C. Science has repeatedly shown that taking between 200 mgs up to several thousand milligrams per day of vitamin C helps boost the immune system, prevent and fight off a cold, helps protect you from stress, and may help protect your heart, brain, and circulatory system too. Remember that while vitamin C does help protect a person from viruses it does not create immunity. However, it may improve the integrity of connective tissue which prevents the spread of viruses and/or infectious agents.

At the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, a study was presented that showed people who took one gram (1000 mg) of vitamin C a day for two weeks showed a boosted immune system response during that time. Certain virus-fighting chemicals (known as cytokines) were increased. What's more, when they looked at responses in a few patients, they found that the effects of vitamin C took place within only five hours!

Three studies found a reduction of at least 80% in the incidence of pneumonia in people taking vitamin C. Another research paper reported substantial treatment benefit from vitamin C in elderly UK patients hospitalized with pneumonia or bronchitis. People with lower blood levels of vitamin C may have the most benefit. Here's an interesting and provocative medical question: How many suspected SARS cases have been checked for blood levels of vitamin C?

From a naturopathic medical perspective, any patient suspected with or having been exposed to SARS should be both tested and at the very least given vitamin C. However, injections should be the main method of support and **not** just taking pills. Intravenous vitamin C treatment allows for higher

dosages than a person could reasonably take orally. Remember that hospitalized SARS patients receive antibiotics, antivirals, and perhaps steroids by injection and *not* only with pills. There is research supporting the use of intravenous vitamin C as an anti-toxin and in preventing death from tetanus exposure. Intravenous vitamin C may enhance the benefits of the medications Prednisone, ACTH, and IVIG. Intravenous vitamin C is also receiving a great deal of attention as an adjunctive cancer therapy. High enough blood levels of vitamin C may actually directly kill cancer cells.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE AGGRESSIVE APPLICATION OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICAL TREATMENTS? HOW ABOUT BOOSTING A PERSON'S IMMUNE SYSTEM TO HELP MAKE IT STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT OFF POTENTIAL INFECTIONS? HOW ABOUT SUPPORTING THE BODY'S INHERENT IMMUNE CAPACITIES TO HELP MINIMIZE THE COMPLICATIONS FROM SARS?

At Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, Washington, the early use of intravenous vitamin C reduced the incidence of organ failure and shortened Intensive Care Unit (ICU) length of stay in critically ill surgical patients. No adverse events or complications have been noted.

Other research suggests that people with infections in the blood (known as sepsis) need higher levels of vitamin C to help minimize any damages from oxidative stresses. This is one reason why the use of antioxidants, such as vitamin C, is reported on more regularly in both medical journals and the national press. People need to be aware that oxidative stress is a key factor for causing tissue and nerve damage, aging, wrinkles, and more. Antioxidants help alleviate that stress.

Many physicians have been using high doses of intravenous vitamin C for well over 30 years, on more than 10,000 patients. Patients with conditions ranging from HIV, hepatitis B and C to pneumonia, have received benefit from such supportive treatments. In my experience of using intravenous vitamin C (and other nutrients) on several hundred cases I have yet to see any problems or complications with this type of aggressive treatment. In fact, people's health and medical issues tend to stabilize or improve.

People need to remember that science-based natural treatments hold an important key for both supporting the body and fighting severe infections (which includes viruses). Other common complementary treatments may include garlic, echinacea, and licorice. In Japan, intravenous licorice has been researched and successfully combined with standard medical treatments for treating the virus hepatitis C and in reducing the risks of liver cancer. Several published research papers have documented enhanced responses to antibiotics, antivirals and vaccinations, when *combined* together with natural therapies.

Other more aggressive forms of complementary and alternative medicines may hold an important key for both early and late stages of SARS cases: intravenous hydrogen peroxide, ozone, various botanicals, and homeopathic protocols have all undergone research with published results showing efficacy for fighting infections and treating pneumonia.

During such times where there is "press panic" and when the scientific community is trying to ascertain the origins of SARS, complementary and alternative medical approaches should be utilized in both suspected and infected people. Immune system enhancing treatments need to be emphasized and consumers need to be aware of such options. Remember that any treatment being used for SARS right now, whether drug or non-drug therapy, is considered unproven and experimental. Complementary and alternative medical strategies can be *combined* with standard forms of treatment. I would like to think of this idea as the best of both worlds—everyone needs to be fighting together against the one common enemy, SARS, and its spread across the globe.

For general preventive approaches to SARS incorporating science-based natural therapies, please refer to <http://www.naturopathicassoc.ca/SARS.htm> Dr. Lemmo practices in Vancouver's Kerrisdale neighbourhood. Contact him at 604-788-8858 or link to [www.lemmo.com](http://www.lemmo.com)

# HEALTH CARE STATS

In BC, residents pay federal taxes which go toward health care, then pay MSP premiums, and many then pay into extended health plans which are a taxable benefit. Even after all that, most health care isn't "covered." Statistics bear this out: In 2002, Canadians spent \$32.89 billion on health care expenses not covered by medicare, ranging from hospital room upgrades to dental and vision-care services, to visits to complementary health providers as well as complementary medicines. Meanwhile, the number of health professionals who are paid either directly by patients or covered in part by insurance plans, continues to grow enormously.

The number of licenced naturopathic physicians in BC has doubled in less than 10 years, and is projected to double again within the next five. Over the last ten years the number of licenced chiropractors in Canada has increased too, from 3748 to more than 6000. We often hear about a looming shortage of MDs, but we never hear about the increase in other health professionals, and the beneficial services they provide. Sometimes, it's as though the press wants us to believe you can only receive health care from MDs; health care from any other licenced professional is implicitly not health care. But patients, frustrated with standard drug therapy and turnstile clinics, are shunning many "covered" therapies. For example, in 1994 only about 5% of Canadians had consulted an alternative practitioner; however, by 2001, 11% of Canadians had done so. Many cutting edge therapies, such as genetic testing as a predictor of disease, are available primarily through complementary health care providers, such as NDs, and are not covered by MSP.

The number of BC residents over the age of 12 seeing NDs/homeopaths is also on the rise. Three years ago just under 100,000 BC residents saw naturopathic doctors or homeopaths—that's individuals seeing NDs, not the number of times those patients actually saw practitioners during the calendar year. This year, it's projected nearly 150,000 BC residents over the age of 12 will see licenced naturopathic doctors or homeopaths in BC—that's 21% of the population! And these figures don't include those individuals seeing other health practitioners, such as physiotherapists, chiropractors or massage therapists.

It's projected that in 2003 nearly 150,000 BC residents will see a licenced naturopathic doctor or homeopath

[Canadians] are quite prepared to go out and spend money on choices for health. It's not that people are keen to buy health services. It's that they are eager to avoid risk. And they will vote with their feet... People are taking their treatments into their own hands." Dr. Tom Noseworthy, University of Calgary Health Policy Studies Director

Clearly, Canadians themselves are directing health care: They want proactive treatments, early assessments, and guidance for the best preventative care possible. The current state system, focussed not on prevention or wellness but on disease states, radical interventions and drug therapies, is costly and outdated. Do you have comments on health care in Canada? Write to the Premier in BC at Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4 or the Prime Minister, 80 Wellington St, Ottawa, K1A 0A2. (Letters to the PM do not require a stamp.)

Sources: Vancouver Sun, March 22, 2003; Statistics Canada; National Population Health Survey

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The BCNA offers patients, across the province, referrals to licenced naturopathic doctors (NDs) in their area, as well as student information to persons interested in the profession. It is the BCNA's purpose

to advance the scientific, educational and professional aspects of naturopathic medicine.

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