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Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine

MD SHORTAGE???. WHY NOT TRY A NATUROPATH, I CAN GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED! By Dr. Caroline Harvey-Smith Ph.D., N.D.

Are you one of the thousands of Guelph citizens who recently discovered that there is a serious shortage of MDs in our community? Or maybe you are one of the many people who have decided that it is time for a proactive approach to your health? Perhaps now is the time for you to consider seeing a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine.

Licensed Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) are well trained to be primary health care practitioners. Students of naturopathic medicine take a minimum of three years premedical studies at university, followed by four years at a recognized college of naturopathic medicine. I studied to be an ND at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine in Toronto. Education at CCNM included basic medical sciences, naturopathic principles and therapeutics, and over 1500 hours of supervised clinical experience. Graduates must also pass rigorous standardized exams in regulated provinces such as Ontario.

Naturopathic medicine is a unique and comprehensive approach to improving health and treating illness. Focusing on prevention, and using natural substances and treatments, NDs support and stimulate the body's ability to heal itself. The primary goal of naturopathic treatment is to address the *cause* of the illness, rather than simply treat or suppress symptoms. The patient is seen as a whole person and the ND takes the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions into account when diagnosing and developing a treatment plan. The primary therapies used by naturopathic doctors are: clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathic medicine, acupuncture and oriental medicine, physical therapies and counselling.

So, as you can see a Naturopathic Doctor is well equipped to diagnose and treat many medical conditions, as well as help direct patients and their families toward a healthier lifestyle. We are trained to recognize conditions that are outside their scope of practice and refer to other health practitioners when it is appropriate to do so. Naturopathic treatments are often combined with conventional medical treatments and NDs work with other health professionals for the good of the patient, referring as necessary to other practitioners including medical doctors, chiropractors, massage therapists, craniosacral therapists, and midwives.

Virtually all chronic and most acute conditions will benefit from treatment by an ND, and people of all ages can be helped. The *most common* health conditions brought to NDs include:

Chronic illnesses such as thyroid dysfunction, fibromyalgia, arthritis, hypertension, digestive disorders, and skin conditions.

Acute conditions including colds and 'flu, headaches urinary tract infections, and intestinal upsets.

Specific women's conditions such as menopausal problems, PMS, fibrocystic breast disease, infertility, endometriosis, ovarian cysts and uterine fibroids, as well as pregnancy.

Other health concerns include stress-related disorders and attention deficit disorder can all be helped by naturopathic medicine.

After last month's article about cold and 'flu prevention, I received a number of calls asking me

what a Naturopath does and how we are trained. I hope that this article answers most of your questions and concerns. If you have any questions, or ideas for articles that you would like to see in “Healthy... by choice” in the future, please call me at The Guelph Naturopathic Healthcare Clinic, 827-9506.