

# Natural/Alternatives require patient responsibility

Continued from 1D

Janesville's Naturopathic Family Clinic. "It's mostly been word of mouth or referrals from medical doctors or from Basics (food coop)."

Michele Nickels, a naturopathic medical doctor who works with traditional medical doctors in Delavan and Waukesha, said her patients will bring their children or spouses into the clinic because they've had a positive experience.

People also are turning to natural medicine as a last resort for mysterious illnesses that their traditional doctors couldn't name.

But natural medicine is a big field, and practitioners range from professionals with eight or more years of rigorous schooling to people who went to correspondence school. It also includes a variety of disciplines and specialties ranging from acupuncture to clinical nutrition.

## Care is inclusive

"Natural medicine focuses on the treatment of the whole person including physical, emotional, mental and spiritual status," explains a news release from the Naturopathic Family Clinic in Janesville.

What should patients expect when they go to see a naturopathic doctor?

Appointments with a naturopath usually last from 60 to 90 minutes.

During an initial visit, the doctor usually will ask you about current and past health problems, family medical history, diet and fitness habits, and energy and stress levels. A physical exam also will be done, along with the necessary lab tests.

Often, the lab tests are the same ones that are ordered at a yearly physical. Other, less common labs include checks for heavy metals or food allergies.

Naturopathic doctors create a treatment plan that might recommend life changes, including dietary changes, herbs or supplements, homeopathic remedies, an exercise plan and counseling.

When the lab work comes back, patients might get additional information about how to cope with a food allergy or clear toxins from their bodies.

"We're looking at the big picture, trying to help people understand why the numbers in the labs are off," Evenson said. "We're not looking at anything in a vacuum."

Additional "alternative treatments" including acupuncture might be suggested.

"We've picked and chosen therapies that have been proven over years and years of use and put them into one basket and call it naturopathic medicine," Evenson said.

## Specific treatments can be ordered

Not all doctors are specialists in all areas.

"Each doctor has a different tool set in their basket," Evenson said.

Some of the different treatments might include:

### ■ Homeopathy

Homeopathy basically means treating a disease with a little bit of itself.

Think of it like a vaccine. The

## HOW DO YOU FIND A NATUROPATH?

If you don't have access to the Internet, try the Yellow Pages under "alternative medicine" or "holistic practitioners." Organic and natural food stores such as Basics, 1221 E. Woodman Road, Janesville, and the Vital Living Center, 1905 Center Ave., Janesville, can help you connect with a naturopath. Many such stores have nutritional consultants and other alternative medicine practitioners with whom they work. Some traditional medical doctors—but not many—work with naturopathic medical doctors.

Naturopaths are not licensed in Wisconsin, so health care consumers need to do their own research.

### Here are some questions to ask before picking a doctor:

● Do you have a bachelor's degree from an accredited school? What did you study? Some naturopathic colleges require a pre-med course of study.

● Is your natural medicine degree from a school accredited by the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education? CNME will accredit only residential (non-correspondence) schools.

Some naturopaths go to correspondence school. If they went to correspondence school, ask where they got their hands-on training.

Here's what the CNME has to say about school by mail: "Correspondence courses can be effective in many disciplines; we do not believe they are in any way adequate for preparing students to become physicians, and we do not consider the graduates to be part of the naturopathic medical profession."

● Are you licensed in a state that requires licensing? Many naturopathic doctors who work in states that don't have a licensing requirement hold a license from a state that does.

The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians advocates for state licensing in all 50 states. The AANP thinks "certifying" and "registering" with states don't go far enough.

● Find out what the costs will be. If labs are ordered, can the blood be drawn at the clinic, or will you have to pay for a blood draw elsewhere?

● Find out if your naturopath will be willing to talk to your regular doctor.

● Be smart. If a naturopathic practitioner suggests you immediately stop taking a medication for a chronic illness, it's a "big red flag" that you're dealing with someone who isn't reputable, said Jill Evenson of the Naturopathic Family Clinic. Patients might be able to reduce their need for a certain drug, but that's something that would require careful consideration.

—Catherine W. Idzerda

body and its immune system are introduced to the appearance of the disease. When that disease strikes, the body already knows what it looks like.

"You're giving your body the chance to have the wisdom to know how to cope," Evenson said.

### ■ Oriental medicine

Acupuncture, the process of placing needles at certain points of the body, is the best known part of Oriental medicine.

But Oriental medicine is more than just a single technique—it's an approach to obtaining health.

"Western medicine sees the body as a series of mechanisms," Evenson said. "Oriental medicine sees the body as a landscape."

Oriental medicine considers the body as a system. Practitioners take a long history from patients that includes everything from past illnesses to daily habits.

One naturopath noted that the body is a "walking biography."

### ■ Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy uses water as a conductor of temperature. Here's an example: If a child has a painful ear infection, the use of hot and cold compresses can relieve that pain.

"It's not that you shouldn't check with the child's doctor about the ear infection," Evenson said. "It's just one way to relieve pain."

### ■ Myofascial bodywork

Myo means muscle, and facial is the sac that surrounds it. Myofascial bodywork is a deep massage that targets a specific problem.

### ■ Clinical nutrition

Naturopaths, like most traditional medical doctors, believe that everything you eat has an impact on the way you feel. For naturopaths, however, nutrition is fundamental.

Another aspect of naturopathy is personal responsibility.

"Alternative medicine is not

easy," Nickels said. "It requires the person to take responsibility for their health."

Recommendations can be life changing.

Evenson agreed, adding that part of a naturopath's job is to help the patient through those changes.

"We might have a list of recommendations for someone, but we take them where they are and ask what they think they can do right now," Evenson said.

For example, people who need to add significantly more vegetables and fiber to their diets might start with small salads every day. Or they even might start with supplements that will give them some of the nutrients they need.

## Programs can complement traditional medicine

Evenson and her colleagues at the clinic spent four years in college, focusing on pre-med, and

then attended four years of further training in an accredited graduate program. Only a handful of naturopathic medical schools are approved by an accrediting agency connected with the U.S. Department of Education. To be accredited, the programs must be full-time, residential programs.

"It's very similar to medical school, except it has a holistic spin," Evenson said. "We study all of the 'ologys' and then spend three years of clinical training."

Evenson, for example, focused on chronic and infectious disease, gastroenterology, endocrinology, pediatrics and women's health during her training period.

Her partners at the clinic, naturopathic doctors Aaron Henkel and Allison Becker, each have specialties, such as men's health, environmental allergies and acupuncture. They also do general practice work.

Nickels, too, has a college degree and an additional five years of study at an accredited, residential program.

Nickels works for Standard Process, a nationally known supplement maker in Palmyra, consults with Pathways in Delavan, and works with an ob-gyn at the Waukesha Memorial Hospital Professional Building.

"I chose to work with medical doctors so I can order my labs and write prescriptions through them," Nickels said.

Traditional medical doctors chose to work with naturopathic doctors because of the breadth of their knowledge.

"I wanted someone who had a good background in applied kinesiology, acupuncture and acupressure," said Dr. John Hicks, a pediatrician who runs Pathways Medical Advocates, Delavan. "There are things that I've embraced that I didn't learn in medical school. There's a lot of nontraditional things that work, and the literature supports them."

What will it take for other traditional medical doctors to embrace naturopaths?

"There's a whole big shift that's got to happen," Hicks said. "We've got to get away from the Newtonian idea that we're machines."

There's a connection between the soul, body and mind, and each of those affects the other."



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Judith Loizzo, a reiki master teacher at the Naturopathic Family Clinic in Janesville, performs transformational energy healing on Zelda Reighard of Janesville.

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