What is Naturopathy?

(Needed)

Today this “oldest medicine” is struggling to redefine itself and negotiate legal hurdles. Dr. Theresa Dale is working to bring her own remedy to the situation.
The Origins of Naturopathy

The term "naturopathy" was first coined in 1895 by Dr. John H. Scheel, a German homeopath. The combination of natural medical therapies that we now group under this umbrella term took form in Germany during the nineteenth century. It was based to a great degree on the work of the Austrian-Dominican friar Sebastian Kneipp. Kneipp was renowned for his hydrotherapy ("water cure") techniques.

In 1900 a group of Kneipp's followers met to decide what other natural healing therapies should be included in their practice. At that time they added homeopathy, nutritional therapy, herbalism, and botanical cures, forms of biologic therapy, psychology and musculo-skeletal manipulation.

Naturopathy was introduced into the U.S. in 1896 by Benedict Lust, a German-born healer who had cured himself of tuberculosis using Kneipp's therapy of hot and cold water treatments. In 1902 Lust founded the American School of Naturopathy in New York City.

Naturopathy grew rapidly in popularity. Within several years there were twenty naturopathic colleges across the country. In 1909 California was the first state to enact a law regulating the practice of naturopathic medicine, soon to be followed by the majority of states. By the 1920's naturopathic medical conventions attracted more than 10,000 practitioners. The profession peaked in the 1930's when there were 83 naturopathic colleges. It experienced a dramatic decline following World War II, eclipsed by the rise of allopathic, technological medicine, and the belief that pharmaceutical drugs were the way to cure disease.

Naturopathy is once again gaining in popularity, but this increasing interest has been met with a lack of clarity about its methods, a lack of public knowledge about its practitioners, and a byzantine regulatory system (currently only Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington [and Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico] have licensing laws, and they differ considerably)

Potential clients basically have to intuit what exactly constitutes naturopathic treatment, since definitions are blurry, practitioners are non-uniform in their procedures, and many naturopathic doctors today have to practice under another license to avoid legal repercussions (see "Visiting a Naturopath" sidebar).

The world has changed considerably since the end of German practitioners met 100 years ago to decide what therapies should be subsumed under the umbrella of "naturopathy." On the one hand, the natural environment has been degraded to the extent that our bodies are polluted with toxins that didn't even exist then. On the other hand, we now have new technologies dreamed of in 1900. Therapies employing these technologies work in the same supportive, non-invasive spirit of naturopathy, and could be valuable in maintaining health in our brave new world.

The debate is not so much in welcoming modalities such as acupuncture (as a biologic therapy) or chelation (under nutrition), but whether to include allopathic techniques. Naturopathics were at one time licensed to perform minor surgery and prescribe pharmaceutical drugs. The three accredited naturopathic colleges are pushing to get states to approve these procedures as part of naturopathic licensing. Most of the professional naturopathic medical associations (and INC) oppose this. The issues will be decided legally by state. This could lead to a significant and confusing distinction between the kind of treatment one would get from two different practitioners, each calling themselves naturopathists.

Naturopathic Practitioner Training

The Naturopathic Practitioner Training is Dr. Dale's attempt to bring clarity to this confusion. Dr. Dale is uniquely qualified to do this. In private practice for twenty years, she has studied in the United States and extensively in Germany, the birthplace of naturopathy. Her advanced degrees and certifications include homeopathy; electro-acupuncture; kinesiology; nutrition; psychology; hypnotherapy—and naturopathy. She has assembled a faculty of highly qualified (and state-certified) experts in their respective fields of alternative medicine. The course is open to professionals (and students earning a degree) in health care. This can, and does, include not only medical practitioners but others in health-related work studying alternative medicine; massage therapists, health product manufacturers, natural food store owners, etc. The course is divided into fourteen sessions spanning fifteen months. There are eleven weekend sessions—Saturday and Sunday, twelve hours each—a five-day residential training period, an audio class, and a Teleclass. There is a prodigious amount of reading and studying to prepare for each session. As mentioned previously, just exactly what is and is not naturopathy is a matter of some debate. Still, there is a core of disciplines that is universally agreed upon.

The course starts out with an introduction to Naturopathy, and then lessons in anatomy and physiology, exploring the facts and myths of how the body functions as a whole and the connection between organs, glands, and systems. (The training also qualifies for Continuing Education Credits.) Over time students learn the basics of various types of Kinesiologic testing, herology, the Five Element Theory of Chinese medicine, aromatherapy, and other natural medical modalities.

Naturopathy has always been a cornerstone of naturopathy. Two of the staff professors teach the development of the 5th process: one is a Kushi Institute—trained macrobiotic teacher and another a specialist in raw foods. They and other lecturers cover all aspects of nutrition, from longevity and anti-aging to predictive and preventative uses. Theory, application, and cooking techniques are presented.

Three weekends are devoted to homeopathy. Dr. Dale herself spent over nine years studying homeopathy in Germany with a number of their leading doctors and at four different institutes and laboratories. "I studied with so many because they're all so good and they have different points of view. It makes you very open. I try to duplicate here what I learned in Germany."

"We go over the theory and the most important classical remedies. There is extensive reading. We also expose our students to everything from homeopathic remedies to discussing the use of dark field microscopy for assessment.

One of Dr. Dale's personal contributions to the course is Neuro/Physical Reprogramming. This is also the core of the Wellness Programs (which are still ongoing at INC). It begins with an intensive introduction to the world of self-healing, including the exploration of one's emotions, the power of the mind and how to locate "identities"—invisible energy patterns that are the core matrix that cause illness. With Neuro/Physical Reprogramming, Dr. Dale developed a specific protocol that uses refined kinesiologic testing combined with homeopathic filters that interpret inaccurate readings.

"When a practitioner comes in contact with a patient, they have their own ideas of what is wrong, and this can interfere with the truth—what the truth is for that person, since we're all biochemically individual. If you're testing yourself to find out the cause of your cancer, you wear these filters to screen out your thoughts. If you're doing transdermal screening, you put certain filters in the machine to filter out subcutaneous ideas, thoughts, or energy patterns. We want to actually bypass the conscious mind. The homeopathic filters go straight to the cellular level... to the real cause of the disease."

"We want to standardize this information. The youngest student in our class is twenty-two. She's taken both Wellness Courses. She works in a vitamin store. Now when people ask her for advice, they're going to get accurate information. The oldest student is a dentist who is sixty years old, and doing research into mercury amalgam toxicity. He doesn't want to practice dentistry anymore, he wants to be a naturopath. This way he can do it in California as a Naturopathic Practitioner."

Currently, California and several other states are once again trying to institute a licensing procedure for naturopathy. No matter what the outcome, there is bound to be a central question that will always need to be answered about this healing art. "The first thing we teach you about naturopathy," jokes Dr. Dale, "is how to pronounce it."

**Contact:**
For more information on The International College of Naturopathy call 805-962-6848 or visit their website at www.wellnesscenter.com.

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