

## WHAT IS A NATUROPATHIC PRACTITIONER ?

S/He is also known across the whole of the European Union as a (Natur)heilpraktiker, which is synonymous with Naturopathic Practitioner. These terms refer to a general practitioner of natural therapeutics skilled in the diagnosis of illness, deficiencies and physical defects, and their treatment and prevention by making use of physical forces and natural agents, as well as by supporting or harnessing the patient's own life force. According to the UK's General Naturopathic Council, naturopathic medicine is a therapeutic system which, amongst other distinguishing features, has four principal hallmarks:

- i) it seeks to facilitate and promote the body's inherent physiological self-healing mechanism;
- ii) it recognizes the uniqueness of each patient;
- iii) it always attempts to establish and treat the cause of a condition, not merely the end effect; and
- iv) it always requires that the whole person be treated, not just the local area, or organ, which may seem to be affected.

The Naturopathic Practitioner makes use of supportive physical forces and agents such as light, water, air, thermal effects, magnetism, earth, electricity or vibration; and seeks to harness the patient's own life force more directly with massage, through rest, by exercise, by stimulating reflexes, by making dietary prescriptions, by psychotherapeutic interventions or by employing the patient's own heterostatic capacity.

The Naturopathic Practitioner may achieve alterative therapeutic effects by any of the following, or other comparable, approaches: actinotherapy, acupressure therapy, applied kinesiology, art therapy, administration of Bach flower remedies, Bowen technique, colonic irrigation, cryotherapy, cupping, electrotherapy, exercise, rest, remedial dance therapy, heliotherapy, hydrotherapy, leech therapy, magnetic induction therapy, massage therapy, mega-vitamin therapy, music therapy, naprapathy, olfactory sympatricotherapy, osseous manipulative therapy, neural therapy, pattern and visualization therapy, pelotherapy, phototherapy, plant juice therapy, phytotherapy, psychotherapy, reflex and zone therapy, remedial diets and fasting, Rolfing, Schüssler's biochemic therapy, sound and ultra-sound therapy, thalassotherapy, traction, and/or the identification and correction of geopathic influences. There is a minority of naturopathic practitioners that has experimentally ventured upon other therapeutic approaches, such as radiæsthesia or radionics, bioresonance-, chromo-, crystal-, orgone-, or polarity-therapy, in addition to the more traditional naturopathic armamentarium of treatments. With the possible exception of megavitamin therapy, or, perhaps, Bowen technique, these approaches to treatment may, by and large, be in harmony with various forms of homœopathy and medical herbalism, and variations of these forms of therapy are, therefore, often major components in Naturopathic Medicine.

A naturopathic physician is defined by the US Department of Labour in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, 1965, 3rd edition, vol I, Definition of Titles, by Numeric Code 079.108 (Medical Services). From this it is evident that in the U.S.A., for instance, there has, in recent times, been a tendency to place a much broader construction upon the words 'naturopathy' and 'naturopathic medicine', so that there it is now sometimes taken to mean a medley of both adjunctive therapies (*i.e.* non-diagnostic modalities, such as hypnosis) and full medical practices (*i.e.* taken to be total therapeutic systems, like homœopathy, classical osteopathy, phytotherapy or chiropractic).

That might appear to blur the obvious distinction between the adjunctive non-diagnostic therapies (as are listed in the third paragraph above) and the autonomous, full medical disciplines, including the practices of such, as a chiropractor, a homœopath, a classical osteopath, a phytotherapist (medical herbalist) or a practitioner of African or Oriental Medicine, for instance. In reality, there is no such blurring. An acupuncturist, or, say, a hypnotist, or masseur is practicing one particular form of therapeutic specialism, whereas the naturopathic practitioner is a **generalist** who may, subsequent to proper diagnostic procedures, employ all or any of the many therapeutic modalities, provided s/he has been appropriately trained in them and can demonstrate competence in them.

As diagnostic approaches, naturopathic medicine may, in addition to all the standard orthodox medical diagnostic procedures, also employs high resolution blood microscopy, thermographic screening, bioresonance, applied kinesiology, monitoring the vascular autonomic signal associated with Nogier's ear diagnosis, tongue-, facial-, iris- or pulse-diagnosis.

The whole endeavour of Naturopathic Medicine is geared toward perpetually allowing the opportunity for innovation within the parameters of the Empirical Medical tradition, which is evidence-based medicine in the sense that the therapeutic approach that has overwhelmingly worked in the past can be expected to work in the future. Therefore, Naturopathic Medicine can be said to be one continuous chain of experimental confirmation of prognosis.

## **A BRIEF GLIMPSE AT ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE**

It is part of the European *empirical medical* tradition that reaches back into pre-historic times, which, as Naturopathic Medicine (or *Naturmedizin*) acquired its own identity around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and 100 years later in the U.S.A. Its antecedents are rooted beyond prehistoric times. It is, for instance, well-known that with disease, or after injury, animals use fasting, and elements of hydro- and/or phyto-therapy, and/or other naturopathic procedures in the instinctive pursuit of healing. The physical culture and

health food movements of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the natural hygiene movement, the preventive health movement, and the developments in physical, botanical, nutritional and homœopathic medicine, were some of the principal elements that came together to form what is now known as Naturopathic Medicine.

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