



Naturopathic Doctors Approaches to Prevention/Treatment of Opioid Addiction

As an example of the work to limit opioid addiction and mitigate the opioid epidemic, former U.S. Army Surgeon General Eric Schoomaker, MD, PhD, characterized the military's engagement of complementary and integrative medicine as imperative.

(Schoomaker E. The Imperative for Integrative Medicine in the Military: A Personal and System Perspective. May 15, 2014, International Research Congress on Integrative Medicine and Health, Miami, Florida. <http://webcast.ircimh.org/>, accessed 7/29/2015.)

NDs collaborate with other professional organizations to modify national prescribing habits to limit opioid prescription. One example is the new policy brief **“Never Only Opioids” Policy Brief: The Imperative for Early Use of Non-Pharmacological, Approaches and Practitioners in Pain Care**, developed by the Pain Action Alliance to Implement a National Strategy (PAINS), a consortium made up of MDs, NDs as well as several dozen leaders working in professional societies, patient advocacy organizations, policy groups, consumers, payers and the private sector working together toward a common vision and mission to improve the treatment of pain. Essentially, the concept is to move integrative approaches from last resort when all else fails to earlier, first line treatment.

(<http://www.painproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/pain-policy-issue-5.pdf>, accessed 7/15/2015)

As a consequence, AMVETS, one of the nation's largest veterans service organizations, supports a letter circulating in the US House of Representatives calling on the VA to assign an employment code so that licensed NDs can be brought into the agency's healthcare system. By signing the letter, Representatives will be on record as stating that, “We need a new approach to veterans' pain management. Our veterans deserve accessibility to all forms of care when making their healthcare decisions, including the services provided by naturopathic physicians.”

As well, students at naturopathic medical schools have taken part in the Betty Ford Medical Student on Addiction Medicine immersion classes open to MDs, Dos and NDs to train in inpatient facilities to work with opiate addiction, withdrawal, pain management, and addiction identification.

ND students at Bastyr Naturopathic Medical school have an 11 week addiction medicine education—where they explore a number of facets of addiction, as compared to as little as 2 hours of education in conventional medicine.

Some small examples of NDs integrated into addiction work in states where naturopathic doctors are licensed include:

<http://www.addictionpro.com/article/naturopathic-approach-treatment>

<http://www.sundancecenter.com/about-us/holistic-approach/naturopathic-medicine/>

<http://www.hawaiinaturopathicretreat.com/conditions/addiction/opiates-opioids-addiction/>



As an example of research on opioid addiction issues, a naturopathic doctor from Massachusetts, Paul Herscu ND, MPH, is finalizing a research paper, in collaboration with several physicians from a tertiary neonatal unit from an urban population (Ohio) on Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), which is a constellation of symptoms due to maternal opiate ingestion during pregnancy. This is a 5-year retrospective analysis to be used to describe demographics of current patients.

Lastly, as an example of both treatment and perception of clinical care, which includes addiction work, the Bastyr Center for Natural Health, one of the teaching clinics at Bastyr University, the naturopathic medical school in Seattle, ranked in the top 3 among 46 Seattle-area primary care clinics for overall patient satisfaction.

(Your Voice Matters: Patient Experience with Primary Care Providers in the Puget Sound Region. Puget Sound Health Alliance 2012; http://www.wacommunitycheckup.org/Media/Default/Documents/psha_your_voice_matters_patient_experience_report_5_2012.pdf. Accessed 7/28/2015.)