



MEDIA GUIDANCE ON TERMINOLOGY RELATED TO NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

On behalf of the [educational](#), [community service](#), and [professional](#) naturopathic industry, we issue the following joint guidance on terminology related to the education and practice of naturopathic medicine.

When practices and practitioners are erroneously labeled as naturopathic doctors or naturopathic physicians (NDs), it becomes deeply confusing for the public, patients, and consumers of natural products. Licensed and regulated naturopathic physicians complete [rigorous four-year, doctoral-level, accredited programs](#) in naturopathic medicine, and must pass a [two-part licensing examination](#) prior to practice. Graduates of [programs recognized](#) by the United States Department of Education are the only graduates eligible for regulated practice in the United States and Canada. Unaccredited programs exist for lay practitioners, however the terminology, government oversight, and training is not equitable or interchangeable.

Identifying oneself as a medical provider when the eligibility requirements for that title have not been met violates medical practice acts and is dangerous to public health. We implore media outlets to adhere to industry best practices and APA Style Guidelines when referring to the regulated practice of naturopathic medicine, as it is imperative that the public be able to distinguish [the difference between an unlicensable naturopath and a licensed naturopathic physician](#).

The terms “naturopathic doctor,” “naturopathic physician,” and “naturopath” are often used interchangeably by medical practitioners in other disciplines and by the public, even though unlicensable naturopaths do not have the same training, scope of practice, or privileges. Highlighting [the difference between licensed naturopathic doctors and unlicensable naturopaths](#) can help the public make informed decisions about the safety of the provider they are considering.

Licensure is designed to protect the public by ensuring that minimum [requirements for competency](#) are being met, and that the scope of practice and professional designations are clearly defined. Licensure also stipulates requisite continuing education, Board oversight and background checks to ensure practitioners continue to safely practice.

In order to meet licensure requirements, an ND must attend an accredited four-year, in-residence, hands-on medical program consisting of a minimum of 4,100 hours of class and

clinical training. In addition to a [standard biomedical curriculum](#), accredited schools require their graduates to complete four years of training in disciplines such as [clinical nutrition](#), [acupuncture](#), [homeopathic medicine](#), [botanical medicine](#), [physical medicine](#), and [counseling](#). For at least the final two years of their medical program, naturopathic medical students intern in clinical settings under the close supervision of licensed professionals.

In most [states with laws regulating naturopathic physicians](#), use of the term “naturopath” or “naturopathic physician” by anyone other than a licensed naturopathic physician is prohibited.

In summation, we urge the media and other medical disciplines to follow journalistic and professional best practices and use the term “naturopathic physician” or “ND” only when describing licensed naturopathic physicians, and to avoid using these terms when referring to unlicensable (or lay) naturopaths in an effort to curtail public confusion.

Sincerely,

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The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) is the professional association that represents licensed naturopathic physicians. AANP strives to make naturopathic medicine available to every American, and to increase recognition of naturopathic physicians as the identified authorities on natural medicine. Learn more at naturopathic.org.

The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC) was established in 2001 to advance the naturopathic medical profession by actively supporting the academic efforts of accredited and recognized schools of naturopathic medicine. The mission of the AANMC is to enhance the individual and collective success of member organizations in delivering high-quality, innovative, and accessible naturopathic medical education and research. Learn more at aanmc.org.

The Institute for Natural Medicine (INM) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization aiming to transform healthcare in America by increasing public awareness of naturopathic medicine and by increasing patient access to licensed naturopathic doctors. Learn more at naturemed.org.