

## NATUROPATHIC PRACTICE ACT MODERNIZATION 2015



The Connecticut law governing the practice of naturopathic medicine does not accurately reflect the dramatic advances in the level of education, training, experience and overall competence of NDs over the course of what is now almost a century since the statute was first enacted. In 2015 the CNPA and The University of Bridgeport, College of Naturopathic Medicine (UBCNM) are collaborating to get legislation passed that will add prescriptive authority to the ND scope of practice.

There are five naturopathic medicine schools in the US accredited to teach this integrative and holistic approach to health and healing. The University of Bridgeport, College of Naturopathic Medicine (UBCNM), founded in 1997, is one of the five accredited colleges and has grown to be a nationally recognized Center of Excellence in the field of Naturopathic Medicine.

The four year post-graduate ND education includes a curriculum with the same biomedical sciences as allopathic physician education for Medical Doctors (MDs). In fact, the UBCNM program actually requires more hours of basic and clinical science than many top medical schools. This rigorous standard and the misunderstanding among MDs about the value and importance of this profession has limited the size of UBs graduating classes, resulting in fewer qualified healthcare providers who could otherwise serve critical primary care roles in Connecticut. Many of these graduates move to states that have enlightened scope of practice laws to begin their practices.

The mission of the Connecticut Naturopathic Physicians Association (CNPA) is to serve our members and the public by advocating for the profession of Naturopathic medicine in the State of Connecticut.

Adding prescriptive authority to the Connecticut Naturopathic Practice Act enables NDs to serve their Connecticut patients' primary care needs, consistent with their ND training and education. The Act would also serve to retain vitally needed primary care doctors. This expansion would enhance the ability of NDs and MDs to develop integrated practices, an approach that is common in states with modernized scope of practice laws. These integrated practices are attractive to patients because they combine both the acute interventions of allopathic medicine with the longer-term restorative strategies of naturopathic medicine.

The University of Bridgeport College of Naturopathic Medicine program presently has difficulty efficiently meeting its educational mission because of the current

outdated law. The UB naturopathic program often meets some required accreditation competencies by sending students and interns out-of-state for

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David M. Brady, ND, DC, CCN, DACBN  
Vice Provost Health Sciences  
University of Bridgeport

components of their clinical training, as well as relying on patient/clinical scenario simulation. This diminishes the credibility of Connecticut's important position as the only state with a naturopathic medical college in

the eastern U.S.

Perhaps most importantly, the current law limits the scope of health care services UB can provide to very needy populations who visit the busy *UB Clinics*.

Consistent with other states, the Act includes refresher pharmacology training and examinations to ensure consistency of knowledge, dosing, and safe, effective prescribing for the pharmaceutical component of this scope of practice change.