

Calling all MDs! How To Help Naturopathic Colleagues Gain Licensure in All 50 States

One of the best ways to build an integrative medical practice is to have a naturopathic doctor in your area with a robust referral pattern or to bring a naturopathic doctor into your practice. Without licensure for NDs in all states, this is not possible in many places. Currently only 22 states license NDs. We need your help!

When a gynecologic oncologist from Massachusetts General called me last year to tell me that one of her young patients with advanced cervical cancer was told by her “naturopath” he could cure her cancer with “herbs and naturopathy,” we were both horrified. After researching the “naturopath” making that claim, it became clear he was neither a naturopath or any other kind of licensable medical provider. I assured my MD colleague this person did not represent the naturopathic community and that he would never be licensable in any state that regulates naturopathic doctors. The patient grew to understand that conventional care alongside naturopathic support was truly her best option. There is a public health concern across the country with similar individuals using the term *naturopathic*.

One key to protecting public health, to giving more people access to naturopathic medicine, and to expanding the reach of licensable naturopathic doctors and integrative medicine in general is to ensure licensure in all 50 states. In January of 2017, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signed a bill to license naturopathic doctors in the state, but *it took over 25 years* of education, lobbying, letter writing, and building our grassroots to achieve that outcome. The process would be *much shorter* and more direct if our conventional medical allies threw their support behind state licensure efforts.

Lawmakers ears perk up when they hear from members of the more conventional medical world, regardless of how you practice. With the MD/DO/NP/PA/nursing community at our side, especially those of you in pre-licensed states, we can get this job done with much more efficiency.

We are gathering a list of willing colleagues ready to write a letter, send an email, or make a phone call in support of naturopathic legislation in your state. If you are willing to be called upon to help NDs in your state, please send an email with your contact information to Michelle A Simon, ND, MPH, <msimon@naturemed.org>, board member of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP), and President of the Institute for Natural Medicine (INM).

The INM is the consumer education partner of the AANP. Together these organizations are implementing a national

campaign in support of naturopathic medicine that includes working alongside state leaders where planned or pending legislation is taking place. After you send your contact information, you will be contacted by an INM representative with next steps.

State affiliates of the American Medical Association are in lockstep with the AMA’s articulated and moneyed policy of no new licensure or expansion of practice for any profession. (You can read more about that here: <http://tinyurl.com/ycbceaco>.) Your voice and your endorsement makes a tremendous difference against that powerful lobby and helps amplify our focused and ongoing work to have all 50 states license naturopathic doctors by 2025.

As most readers of the *Townsend Letter* know, naturopathic doctors, trained at four-year, in-residence, full-time naturopathic medical schools, emphasize preventive care, whole person medicine, and natural medicine approaches for both acute and chronic disease. That our naturopathic approaches are needed more than ever is evident by the galloping rates of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and obesity in this country; many of these and other ailments are preventable and treatable with lifestyle and diet modification and effective natural medicine, hallmarks of naturopathic practice.

We have had unprecedented success in the legislative arena in the past six years. North Dakota, Colorado, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts have all had success. A bill is currently sitting on the Rhode Island Governor’s desk. We have momentum, and we have a trained force of naturopathic doctor advocates ready to lead legislative efforts in their respective states. The AANP maintains a robust legislative toolbox on education and training, efficacy and cost efficacy, and patient testimonials for ND state leaders to access.

If you are willing, please send your contact information to Dr. Simon as above. Thank you for your support and encouragement.

Amy Rothenberg, ND

Amy Rothenberg, ND, is the recipient of the 2017 AANP Naturopathic Physician of the Year Award. She spearheaded the movement that achieved licensure in Massachusetts in 2017. She has practiced for the past 32 years in Enfield, CT www.nhcmcd.com, teaches through the New England School of Homeopathy www.nesh.com, and is a contributor to the HuffPost <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/amy-rothenberg-nd>.

