

The Naturopathic Approach

I am often asked about the difference between naturopathic medicine and conventional medicine. It is important to distinguish our approach conceptually because understanding the philosophy behind our approach will increase the likelihood of therapeutic success. In addition, understanding the hierarchical therapeutic process provides a foundation upon which patients can rely when faced with the inevitable ebb and flow of any healing process.

The main differences between naturopathic and conventional medicine are that of modality and philosophy. We have somewhat different tools and we use them with specific and unique purpose. Philosophy is, by far, most important. There are seven major tenets to naturopathic philosophy. All of which are important to use in the treatment of each individual patient. Naturopaths make every attempt to hold these philosophies in the forefront of their minds each and every day with each and every patient.

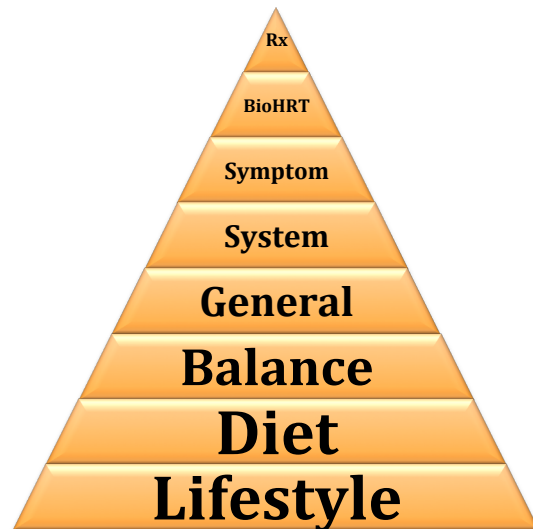


A simple example of this would be the common cold. First, the majority of colds are caused by a virus, not by a bacteria. But if a mother of three young children is running herself ragged at home and at work and then “catches” a cold, was the cause of the cold the virus or the stress that weakened the immune system? (Treat the Cause) We treat both with attention to the healing process that is already occurring within the body (Healing Power of Nature). We do not suppress a fever, if present, because the fever is that body’s way to kill the bug; rather we support the fever and offer supportive nutrients, fluids and rest. We resist the use of antibiotics (First, Do No Harm), as the majority of these illnesses are viral, which antibiotics are powerless against. The body can handle the majority of infections with supportive conservative care. We then educate the patient of this process so that they can manage the next cold on their own (Doctor as Teacher), while discovering the real reason the patient got sick and helping to strategize as plan to reduce the total stress load that is the ultimate cause of her cold (Prevention, Treat the Whole Person, Wellness).

The tools or modalities we utilize for treatment may vary within our profession; however, we are all schooled in lifestyle and dietary counseling, the use of natural supplements and herbal medicine,

homeopathy and physical medicine, much like chiropractic. Any or all may be utilized for each patient and for any condition. By using these modalities and employing this philosophy we create an individualized protocol for the patient that has as its framework a **Hierarchy of Therapeutics**. To describe this hierarchy I refer to it in the shape of a pyramid.

The base of this pyramid involves **LIFESTYLE** evaluation and assessment. This pertains to what we do, what we think, exercise, sun exposure, rest, relaxation pursuits, goals and dreams, relationships, etc. We put it all on the table, so to speak, as everything needs to be up for negotiation. From here we move toward **DIET** assessment and make recommendations for the individual based on science, observation and individual needs. Next we look at **BALANCE** on all levels including structural integrity and vertebral alignment, spiritual balance, energetic balance and more. We would utilize modalities such as massage, manipulation, exercise, stretching, craniosacral, homeopathy and others. Further, we enter into the recommendation of supplementary nutritional support for the **GENERAL** health of the individual, such as essential fatty acids, antioxidants and multivitamins. Stepping up again, we look



toward more specific recommendations for the unique **SYSTEMS** that we see require support such as the digestion and immune function. Stepping up yet again, we work on **SYMPTOM** control using any of our modalities to provide temporary support while continuing to maintain our focus on the underlying causal issues. At the top of the pyramid, we may utilize more direct intervention such as **BIOIDENTICAL HORMONE REPLACEMENT** or even the use of pharmaceutical **MEDICATIONS** and **SURGERY** when necessary. We are certainly not against the use of these modalities as technological advances in these areas have saved lives; however, we are against the overuse of these methods, especially for the treatment of chronic disease for which they were not designed. There is a saying that goes "if the only tool in your tool belt is a hammer, then every problem starts to look like a nail." The problem is that the human body is incredibly complex and all dysfunction cannot be repaired with hammers and nails.

As we move up this pyramid the interventions gradually become more specific, more invasive, more expensive and also involve more risk. They also require less responsibility from the individual patient, which means that they are generally easier to employ. These quick fixes at the top of the pyramid rarely "fix" anything in the long run. Ultimately the more work we do at the bottom of this hierarchy, the less intervention we have to engage in at the upper levels, the less medication we have to prescribe, the less supplements we have to recommend, and the longer lasting the effects of our therapy and the quicker we move in the direction of health and overall well-being. We will often engage in working on many of these levels simultaneously, but our focus remains on the bottom half of the pyramid where the longest lasting effects are generated.

More simply put, if we can reestablish the basis for health in the individual, an equation that has been known for centuries, while removing the obstacles to cure, the body will, itself, move in the direction of health and wellness. Through the use of a naturopathic philosophical approach, naturopathic modalities and a therapeutic hierarchy we can successfully achieve of this ultimate goal.

Life in all its fullness is mother nature obeyed.

- Weston A. Price