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Naturopathy: current and future developments.

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Naturopathy: current and future developments

The Context

One of the debates that is never far from the surface amongst UK naturopaths is what therapies can be considered to be naturopathic and which should be practised by naturopaths. For patients this can be confusing as different practitioners may use a wide range of different therapies. Fortunately naturopaths share a common belief that the focus for attention in a treatment should include:

- The importance of considering the individual as unique,
- The need to identify the cause(s) of the condition rather than treating symptoms
- The individual has the power to heal themselves
- The whole person and not just the area of the symptoms needs to be treated

Naturopaths therefore use a variety of treatments that frequently include hydrotherapy, counselling, stress management and relaxation techniques, lifestyle advice, therapeutic massage, dietary advice, nutritional supplements and detoxification methods. Other naturopaths may adopt a naturopathic philosophy in the practice of the therapy in which they primarily trained e.g. osteopathy, nutritional therapy. Some naturopaths may be trained in the use of herbs and/or homeopathic remedies and in some cases may also be trained in acupuncture. Naturopaths who have received their training in the USA, Australia or New

Zealand are likely to be practitioners who will share the common philosophy but will practice a wide range of therapies normally including herbal medicine, homeopathy, nutritional therapy and therapeutic bodywork. At the University of Westminster there is an extensive portfolio of degrees in complementary therapies within the School of Integrated Health. The availability of modules from these courses in naturopathy, therapeutic bodywork, nutritional therapy, herbal medicine and homeopathy has presented an opportunity to develop a pathway that provides a comprehensive development of naturopathic skills. This pathway provides not only a thorough grounding in naturopathic philosophy and practice but by means of Graduate Diploma courses, the opportunity to further develop expertise in one or more therapies

The School of Integrated Health

The School grew out of the innovative collaborative work between the Marylebone Health Centre ¹, Centre for Community Care and Primary Health and School of Biosciences of the University of Westminster as well as established private college quality providers of complementary therapies courses. The extensive portfolio of courses in complementary medicine that developed from this unique collaborative venture lead to the establishment of the School of Integrated Health within the University of Westminster. The development of the current portfolio of twenty courses in complementary medicine has been described previously². The BSc programmes share a common core of health

sciences, practitioner development and research skills the development³. The development of the innovative Polyclinic⁴ where student gain the majority of their clinical training under the close supervision of experienced practitioners has been a vital component of the quality provision. Through the links between the School and NHS providers, students gain the experience of observing and in some cases practising in integrated healthcare environments. The courses have grown steadily to the current level of an annual total of approximately 400 fulltime and 200 part-time students. The curriculum has continued to evolve, particularly through working closely with the professional bodies associated with each of the therapies. The sharing of best practice amongst the courses has been an effective catalyst in not only the academic and skills components but also the clinical training.

Developments in Naturopathy

Following the visit by the General Council and Register of Naturopaths (GCRN) to the University of Westminster in July 2004, an innovative pathway in naturopathic medicine was accredited. On successful completion of the modules identified in Figure 1, students will be eligible to apply for registration as naturopaths. Students gain a comprehensive understanding of naturopathic philosophy as well as the fundamental skills associated with providing advice on diet, rest relaxation, exercise and life style. Naturopathic skills developed include hydrotherapy, therapeutic bodywork, dietary therapy, counselling, stress management and detoxification methods. Students may also choose from a wide

range of option modules to further develop expertise in one or more therapies e.g. herbal medicine or bodywork (Figure 2). The skills gained are consolidated throughout the course within the Polyclinic. The students are able to observe experienced naturopaths treating patients or develop their own skills under close supervision. Through placement opportunities students will be able to gain the experience of observing practitioners working for a variety of private practice as well as NHS settings. On graduation, students may complete a Graduate Diploma course to further develop their skills in herbal medicine, homeopathy, nutritional therapy or therapeutic bodywork. The established Masters courses of the School provide opportunities for graduates to further develop their skills as practitioners and researchers. The Graduate School, in which MPhil and PhD students carry out research, for example into the efficacy of therapies, is growing rapidly and has attracted significant external funding for a wide range of research projects.

The Future

The recent accreditation of naturopathic medicine pathway, to enable graduates to register as naturopaths, will provide a source of new entrants for the profession. The opportunities for research into aspects of naturopathic practice and the provision of courses for continuing professional development will continue to evolve out of the current provision of the School of Integrated Health. Through links with other established providers of education, clinical training and

research, both nationally and internationally it is hoped that a significant contribution will be made to the development of naturopathy within the UK.

References

1. Pietroni PC and Pietroni C. *Innovation in Community Care and Primary Health*. Published by Churchill Livingstone 1996.
2. Isbell B. Complementary therapies courses for the 21st century. *Complementary Therapies in Nursing and Midwifery* 2001;7:90-94.
3. Isbell B, Coldham S, Elliott R, and Shaw S. *Working towards Integrated Healthcare: developing complementary therapies at the University of Westminster* 2003; 9:114-117.
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Figure 1

Modules of the Naturopathy Pathway

Year 1

Principles of Naturopathy

Prescribing Therapies (Clinic Module)

Complementary Therapies

Therapeutic Massage

Living Anatomy

Biological Chemistry

Physiology

Personal and Professional Development

Year 2

Naturopathic Skills

Energy Concepts and Therapeutics (Clinic Module)

Dietetics and Dietary Therapy

Integrated Physiology

Applied Pathophysiology

Methods of Research in Complementary Medicine

Patient-Centred Communication

Year 3

Clinical Practice in Naturopathy (Clinical Module)

Practice in Complementary Therapies (Clinical Module)

Holistic Systems

Differential Diagnosis

Research in Practice

Dynamics of Clinical Practice

Figure 2

Option Modules available within the Naturopathic Pathway

(Modules in the therapies listed below are also available as short courses)

Herbal Medicine

Homeopathy

Nutritional Therapy

Therapeutic Bodywork: Soft tissue approaches, Patterns of Dysfunction, Body

Perspectives and Clinical Approaches

Craniosacral Therapy

Yoga

Thai Yoga Massage

Shiatsu

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For additional information about the naturopathic pathway of the Complementary therapies or other courses contact:

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