

## Professional news

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# In search of the Naturopaths' Code

*Roger Newman Turner  
reports on a historic  
meeting to define the  
foundations of naturopathic  
medicine*

IN THEIR attempts to keep abreast of the rapid developments in natural medicine, naturopaths have been in danger of losing sight of the principles that define their system of health care. Indeed, a criticism that has been levelled at some sections of the profession is that they are merely practising 'green allopathy' while ignoring the basic concepts that govern treatment. The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project (FNM) will anchor naturopathic clinical practice firmly to its philosophical roots.

The FNM Project, an exciting initiative by leaders of naturopathic medicine in the United States to publish a new definitive textbook, has been enthusiastically received by academic institutions and practitioners internationally. FNM's team of senior editors, headed by Executive Editor Pamela Snider ND (US) includes Jared Zeff ND, LAc (US), Joseph Pizzorno ND (US), and James Sensenig ND (US). The team was expanded this spring to include international editors Stephen P. Myers PhD, BMed, ND (Australia), Don Warren ND, DHANP (Canada) and myself, Roger Newman Turner ND, DO, BAc (UK).

With a skilled array of associate editors, the team is working with nearly 170 contributing authors from six countries.

*The Healing Power of Nature: the Foundations of Naturopathic*

*Medicine and the Ecology of Healing* will be published by Elsevier in 2009 and is an attempt to codify naturopathic philosophy and clinical theory in a scientifically meaningful way for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It will be the first such textbook since Henry Lindlahr published his *Nature Cure: Philosophy and Practice* more than 90 years ago.

### Editorial retreat

To ensure that the textbook will reflect a rigorous synthesis of the principles, an Editorial Retreat was held in April 2007 at Skamania Lodge, in the Columbia River Gorge, near Portland in Oregon.

This historic meeting was probably the first time that leading thinkers, teachers, and practitioners of naturopathic medicine from four continents have met to debate the profession's core principles.

The meeting started with a reception and welcome at the National College of Natural Medicine in Portland, America's oldest established naturopathic college, which has just celebrated its 50th anniversary and is the academic home of the Foundations Project.

The NCNM's outgoing president, Dr William Kepler PhD, welcomed delegates and said that the Foundations Project would clarify and explain the principles that guide the practise of naturopathic medicine to non-NDs. Everyone then decamped to the Lodge where an outdoor opening ceremony was followed by four days of intensive brainstorming, discussion, and debate facilitated by Valerie Campbell, from Toronto, an experienced leader of focus groups.

Delegates were able to examine in considerable depth the central tenets of naturopathic medicine, aided by input from a number of invited specialists. These included Professor Chris Grontowski PhD, an expert in philosophy and epistemology; Iris Bell MD, PhD, Professor of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, who presented an Empirical Approach to Modelling the Vital Force; Wayne Jonas MD, PhD, Director of the Samueli Institute, which examines the environment of healing; and Mary Koithan RN, PhD, an expert on theoretical structure. There were also presentations on complexity and systems theory from both Dr Bell and Christa Louise MS, PhD, Executive Director of the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Exam.

### Consensus on key themes

Plenary sessions, interspersed with breakout groups to discuss specific aspects of key themes, enabled the meeting to reach considerable consensus on such issues as the vis medicatrix naturae, spirituality, the nature of disease, unitary theory, adaptation and the process of healing, the law of cure, and the therapeutic process.

Core, immutable concepts were distinguished from those with scope for later refinement. Above all, diversity of thought within the profession was respected while recognising an overall coherence in the acceptance of the principles by which naturopathic medicine is defined.

The textbook project is a truly international effort, with nearly 170 contributors from various parts of the world, including a number from the UK, assembling the most recent thinking on:



Naturopathic think tank...delegates from various parts of the world take a break from brainstorming to pose outside their "retreat" at Skamania Lodge, in the Columbia River Gorge, near Portland in Oregon.

*Photo courtesy of Sarah Spring, NCNM*

1. The principles and theory of naturopathic medicine
2. The science of health and the process of healing

*To include:*

- a. Application to primary care
- b. Application to clinical decision making
- c. Implications for public health policy

After publication of the book it is anticipated that the process of codifying and developing the philosophy to reflect modern research will be achieved through a series of symposia.

A project as ambitious as this does require financial support and, apart from the publishers, Elsevier, there is generous support from some of the leading manufacturers in the natural foods and medicines field who share the vision of the project's creators.

Further support is essential and possible through the Friends of the Foundations Project at [wwwFOUNDATIONSproject.com](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSproject.com)

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#### **The Project Team**

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*Project Manager:* Sharon A. Fisher.

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#### **The Book**

*The Healing Power of Nature: The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine and the Ecology of Healing.*

Section one: The Profession; The Vis Medicatrix Naturae throughout time.

Section two: Naturopathic Medicine; Philosophy, Principles, and Clinical Theory.

Section three: Clinical Applications; Naturopathic Theory.

Section four: Science and Clinical Theory; Naturopathic medicine, traditional research, and the new sciences.

Section five: The Promise of Naturopathic Medicine; Creating a healthy world.

## Seeking the Naturopath's code



BNA Fellow Roger Newman Turner giving the British view on naturopathy at a meeting in the US earlier this year. He and naturopathic colleagues from around the world were participants in *The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project (FNM)*, which is working towards the publication of a new definitive textbook on Naturopathy (See pages 4 and 5).

**CREATING HEALTH NATURALLY**

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