

## **It's Time: Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project Underway** Naturopathic Doctors News & Review, August, 2006: 22.

Kate Williams, MA

*“Our little profession went out into the wilderness over the last 40 years. We survived. We gathered bits of wisdom and history of our elders. We are now in a position to articulate this to the next generation.”*

—Jared Zeff, ND Senior Editor



A constellation of professional growth, innovation, and dedication is revolving around the unfolding Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project (FNM). Its central collaborative effort to codify naturopathic knowledge through writing and publishing the definitive textbook, *The Healing Power of Nature: The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine and the Ecology of Healing*, is a profound effort in itself, and the fulcrum in a broad effort to strengthen, deepen, unify, and communicate the work of modern naturopathic physicians.

According to Dr. James Sensenig, Senior Editor, “in the last several decades we have moved away from the core principles and philosophy upon which naturopathic medicine was built. By not adequately articulating the foundations that historically differentiate our medicine from others, we are at risk of participating in the assimilation of naturopathic medicine into the dominant medical paradigm.”

Like most bursts of academic genius, FNM emerged out of philosophical discussions, passionate debates, research, practice, and contemplative moments. FNM came out of the salon and into public view in September of 2004 when the idea was presented to the American Association of Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC) Dean’s Council and the Institute for Natural Medicine Board.

Since FNM’s conception, the enthusiasm within the profession continues to mount. What began among a handful of prominent naturopathic philosophy instructors, Pamela Snider, Jared Zeff, James Sensenig, and Joe Pizzorno, now includes an established academic home at the National College of Natural Medicine (NCNM); 22 editors and section leaders; 150 contributors, faculty and leaders from 9 colleges and 6 countries; and a committed publisher, Elsevier. NCNM has committed to significant, ongoing in-kind support including a virtual learning platform (MOODLE), fiscal reporting, research, work-study support, and faculty participation.

“We are bringing the collective experience of our physicians to the task. We are capturing their wisdom, their expertise, and their ideas on the heart of naturopathic medicine,” says Managing and Senior Editor Pamela Snider, ND. FNM is about scholarship, professional codification, unification, synthesis, rigor, and communication. “To catapult into the future—we have to do that from a very solid foundation.” Daria Love, ND, DC, CCNM Board of Governors.

FNM is responding to four key trends. First, the profession is poised to provide a significant contribution to primary and specialty health care. As a public health epidemiologist, NCNM President William Keppler, PhD concurs, “The health care

system in our nation is in virtual chaos and will probably collapse in the near future. The Foundations Project will clarify and explain the principles that guide the practice of naturopathic medicine to non-NDs.”

Second, FNM will provide the cohesive framework for defining and applying the conceptual basis of naturopathic medicine as it fully engages its role in local and global health care systems. Clarifying the whole system of naturopathic medicine through active scholarship, determining its uniqueness, and developing coherence is critical to naming who we are as naturopathic physicians and what we will become within the health care system.

Third, applying virtual learning technology to collaborative writing will accelerate progress in the profession’s coherence of scholarship. Finally, FNM’s goal to identify naturopathic medicine as a unique, defined field will help clearly distinguish it from the emerging fields of integrative medicine, CAM fields, and other world medicines.

“The time has come to put our stake in the ground,” Joe Pizzorno, ND, Senior Editor, asserted at last year’s AANP convention, “to clearly state and make the case for the conceptual foundations of our medicine. This is the most exciting thing that has happened in the naturopathic profession in the last 100 years.”

FNM will hold editorial retreats and Symposia every five years, providing the container for presentations of new ideas, exposure to leading thinkers from other disciplines, critical debate, and inquiry. Symposia will assemble researchers, practitioners, scholars, faculty, and editors to establish and standardize a cohesive and comprehensive body of knowledge.

Complementing the symposia and retreats to come has been The Gathering, an annual event sponsored by student leaders who formed the Naturopathic Society at SCNM and NCNM. This event has provided a valuable venue for FNM contributors to gather, and engage in collegial inquiry about the philosophy of naturopathic medicine.

This ongoing process of codifying the knowledge of naturopathic medicine will extend and evolve the founding philosophy and principles of naturopathic medicine. The philosophy will be preserved and modernized to address current research and new knowledge in naturopathic medicine and other fields and healthcare trends. New editions of the textbook will arise from each Symposium.

The textbook itself will include the best and most recent scholarship. It will be comprised of five sections (see sidebar) based on the philosophy, theory, and principles of naturopathic medicine as a synthesis of the scholastic community’s knowledge. Publication is set for 2008.

Since Lindlahr’s 1913 publication, *Nature Cure: Philosophy & Practice Based on the Unity of Disease & Cure*, there has been no textbook updating the underlying theory of naturopathic medicine. In the 1950s, several scholars wrote on naturopathy—Spitler’s *Basic Naturopathy*, Wendel’s *Standardized Naturopathy*, Kuts-Cheraux’s *Naturopathic Materia Medica*—but to date, no comprehensive guide to clinical practice and case analysis based on applied theory and referenced to current research has been published. FNM’s textbook will provide modern students, faculty, scholars, physicians, other disciplines, and policy makers a comprehensive explanation on how to think clinically within the practice of naturopathic medicine.

To facilitate this international creation, FNM has teamed up with NCNM to provide contributing authors an online platform through an interactive software program

MOODLE. This allows for an international dialogue with boundless ability to share ideas and information. Already, writing teams are stirring up the virtually landscape as they piece together their research, wisdom, and experience in words.

Of course, a project this ambitious requires dedication, devotion, and most essentially sponsorship through monetary and in-kind donations. FNM's Friends of the Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project, share the project's vision, and are helping create it. The budget covering five years is \$590,000, or \$195,000 per annum. So far, sponsors have donated \$173,000. FNM has designated categories of sponsorship ranging from a single contribution of \$50 to \$25,000 per year for five years. Project sponsors, with their permission, will be included in various visibility opportunities.

Sponsorship recognition includes an entry on a special page in the textbook, inclusion in a presentation at the Symposium outlining their involvement, and invitation to a high profile Gala Reception for Friends of the Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine, authors, and contributors at the profession's annual conventions, and honoring their leadership and support. For more information about sponsorship, contact Susan Hunter at NCNM, [shunter@ncnm.edu](mailto:shunter@ncnm.edu), 503-552-1512.

Throughout the year, look for updates on the progress of FNM's project. Also, check out the lively and informative interview held on the NCNM campus this past April with FNM managing/senior and associate editors, Pamela Snider, ND and David Schleich, PhD at [www.ncnm.edu](http://www.ncnm.edu) or [www.ndnr.com](http://www.ndnr.com). As Rita Bettenburg, ND, dean of Naturopathic Medicine at NCNM, and FNM associate editor sums it up, "This project is electric?"

(Two side bars, one listing names of editors, another the book's chapters, are included in published article—Naturopathic Doctors News & Review)