



Naturopathic Care is Cost Effective: Treatment

Naturopathic doctors (NDs) are specialists in cost-effective, safe, evidence-based natural medicine treatment approaches. Multiple studies find those patients seen by naturopathic doctors get well and stay well for less cost, due to less expensive treatments, lower technology interventions, and naturopathic medicine's emphasis on disease prevention, lifestyle modification and health promotion.

A few treatment studies include:

Among Canadian postal employees with cardiovascular disease, **naturopathic patients needed fewer medications, had better blood pressure and cholesterol levels, better mood, less fatigue and better productivity at work.** Total societal cost savings estimated at \$1,025/year per employee.

(Weeks J. Model Whole Practice Study Finds Treatment by Naturopathic Doctors Effective & Cost-Saving for Canada Post Employees with Cardiovascular Disease. 2010; http://theintegratorblog.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=682&Itemid=189. Accessed July 25, 2015)

Postal workers are at increased risk of rotator cuff injuries that may settle into chronic inflammation and pain. In one trial, conventional treatment for these injuries was compared to naturopathic treatment. While both arms improved, **the ND arm improved to a greater and faster rate, with better function, and better quality of life** measures than conventional treatment.

(Naturopathic Treatment of Rotator Cuff Tendinitis Among Canadian Postal Workers: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Arthritis & Rheumatism (Arthritis Care & Research), Vol. 61, No. 8, August 15, 2009, pp 1037–1045.)

A study in poorly controlled diabetic patients found that in those treated by NDs, **improvements were noted in self-monitoring of glucose, diet, self-efficacy, motivation and mood.** Participants also had reductions in blood glucose that exceeded those for similar patients who did not receive ND care.

(Bradley RD, Sherman KJ. "Adjunctive naturopathic care for type 2 diabetes: patient-reported and clinical outcomes after one year." BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine 2012, Apr 18;12:44)

An internal Blue Shield study in King County, WA, presented evidence showing naturopathic doctors **treated 7 of the top 10 most expensive health conditions more cost effectively** than MDs or other conventional providers, and estimated that a naturopathic-centered managed care program could cut the costs of chronic and stress related illness by up to 40% and lower the costs of specialist utilization by 30%.

(Henny, GC, Alternative Health Care Consultant, King County Medical Blue Shield (KCMBS), Phase I Final Report: AlternativeHealthcare Project, 1995)

Back pain is one of the most common complaints doctors see. In one trial, **those treated by NDs experienced less pain, more weight loss, and importantly, fewer days off work.**

(Szczerko O, Cooley K, Busse JW, et al. Naturopathic care for chronic low back pain: a randomized trial. PLoS One. 2007;2(9):e919.)

A second trial on back pain found effectiveness to be similar between NDs and conventional treatment, yet **QALY was better for the ND arm**, and medical cost of ND was \$629 per person versus \$700 for conventional arm. Importantly, there was a **total cost benefit of \$188 per person for the ND arm, versus total cost spending of \$1,212 for standard care if absenteeism was included.**

(Herman PM, et al. Cost-effectiveness of naturopathic care for chronic low back pain. Alt Ther Heal Med 2008; 14(2): 32-39.)



As one example in women's health, and regarding menopausal symptoms, **naturopathic patients smoked less, exercised more, and were seven times more likely to report improvement in insomnia and increased energy** than those receiving conventional treatment.

(Cramer EH, Jones P, Keenan NL, Thompson BL. Is naturopathy as effective as conventional therapy for treatment of menopausal symptoms? J Altern Complement Med. Aug 2003;9(4):529-538.)

As an example of benefits of whole body treatment, **significant improvements in anxiety, fatigue, mental health, concentration, social functioning, vitality, and overall quality of life** than by conventional psychotherapy alone.

(Cooley K, Szczurko O, Perri D, et al. Naturopathic care for anxiety: a randomized controlled trial ISRCTN78958974. PLoS One. 2009;4(8):e6628.)

An example of a study demonstrating that **for insured patients, approaches used by NDs lower insurance expenditures, at the time lowering it from \$4,153 to \$3,797 p=0.0001.**

(Lind BK, Lafferty WE, Tyree PT, Diehr PK. Comparison of health care expenditures among insured users and nonusers of complementary and alternative medicine in Washington State: a cost minimization analysis. J Altern Complement Med. 2010;16(4):411-17.)

Naturopathic doctors delivering the same Medicaid services in Oregon are 57.5% more cost effective than MD/DO/NP PCPs providing the same services.

(Lafferty, et al. Insurance Coverage and Subsequent Utilization of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Providers. Journal of Managed Care. July 2006.)

Aside from patient satisfaction in these treatments, patients that see CAM practitioners have a reduction of conventional drug use.

(Stewart D, Weeks J, Bent S. Utilization, patient satisfaction, and cost implications of acupuncture, massage, and naturopathic medicine offered as covered health benefits: a comparison of two delivery models. Alternative Therapies in Health & Medicine. 2001;7:66-70)

As an example of perception of clinical care, Bastyr Center for Natural Health, the teaching clinic of the naturopathic medical school Bastyr University in Seattle, **ranked in the top 3 among 46 Seattle-area primary care clinics for overall patient satisfaction.**

(Your Voice Matters: Patient Experience with Primary Care Providers in the Puget Sound Region. 2012; http://www.wacommunitycheckup.org/Media/Default/Documents/psha_your_voice_matters_patient_experience_report_5_2012.pdf. Accessed July 28, 2015.)

A Washington study found that in a majority of cases naturopathic care is not “add-on” medical care.

(Cherkin DC, Deyo RA, Sherman KJ et al. Characteristics of visits to licensed acupuncturists, chiropractors, massage therapists, and naturopathic physicians. J Am Board Fam Pract. 2002; 15:463-472.)