

Naturopathic notes: Linking Communication and Nature to Good Clinical Practices

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I am writing this editorial during what is hopefully the last of the snow and ice storms that have characterized much of this Winter for our naturopathic colleagues across Canada. While these extremes of weather have wreaked havoc on many of our clinical schedules, they also invite us to look at how we are often at our most disconnected from nature during Winter.

When we think of using the tools of the natural world to treat our patients, I imagine most of us think of the warmer seasons. Still, even in Winter, there is an opportunity to reflect on things outside of our control, whether it's schedule chaos, an unplanned snow day, or a loss of power due to rain or wind storms.

To start off 2019, this edition of *Vital Link* is an eclectic mix of articles on nature and environment, clinical communication, brain health, and reflection on our changing role in the Canadian health care eco-system.

Dr. John Bender, ND leads off this edition with an editorial commentary on the therapeutic trends he has seen in the profession over his 40 years as an ND practicing in Waterloo, Ontario. He asks us to reflect on the importance of good clinical communication in cementing and the role of ND as a trusted advisor in an increasingly commercialized health care market. Compassionate care, he writes, ties into the central principles of naturopathy, but is increasingly being lost in our embrace of what he calls 'band wagon' therapies.

Following this theme, Dr. Oscar Hernandez, ND and myself explore good clinical communication and strategies for dealing with depression and anxiety in LGBTQ youth. Dr. Hernandez currently practices in Brampton, Ontario at Raven Naturopathic Health Services, with a clinical focus on LGBTQ health and clinical care. We argue for the importance of understanding the unique vulnerabilities of LGBTQ youth to mood disorders and suicidality, and of building community resource support teams for emergent situations. Additionally, we challenge clinicians to ask questions about social environments in a way that supports the patient's safety and provides space for therapeutic success.

Our third article is a broader philosophical discussion of the role of nature, eco-psychology and environment in naturopathic practice. Dr. Denis Marier, ND has served as clinical supervisor at CCNM in Toronto, performed overseas medical relief work, and for many years has been a wilderness therapy guide. He discusses practical strategies for incorporating what he calls a 'nature history', involving elements of our natural environment, as well as our place in the natural world, into clinical care and our physical office spaces.

Finally, our evidence-informed practice article is from Dr. Nikole MacLellan, ND and David Nelson (ND cand.), on the subject of naturopathic concussion assessment and management. Dr. MacLellan is a dual licensed ND and Registered Dietician practicing in a sports medicine clinic in Burnside Nova Scotia, and Mr. Nelson is a fourth-year CCNM ND student, member of the *inVIVO* Planetary Health research group., and a long-time certified strength coach. Their discussion shares emerging consensus about mechanism of injury in concussion, as well as assessment, and effective naturopathic interventions. This is an area where, as the authors point out, naturopathic doctors have a wealth of modalities to draw from and can be valuable members of an effective multi-disciplinary approach to these complex disorders.

Lastly, just as we were going to press, we learned of the passing this week of a highly esteemed leader of the ND profession in North America, Dr. Walter Crinnion, ND. Dr. Crinnion was a former faculty member at Bastyr and Southwest Naturopathic schools, as well as a researcher and prolific writer and speaker. His pioneering work on environmental illness and detoxification inspired and mentored many ND researchers and clinicians, including your editor. Walter made several contributions to the *Vital Link* over the years, each to the great pleasure of our readers. He will be sorely missed.

As always, we welcome feedback about the *Vital Link* and inquiries about contributing to upcoming editions. My email, as always, is open at drmarianne@ionacare.ca. 🍁