



WNF: At the Table with the Global Leaders in Health Care

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The healthcare world is changing right now. Three important events will collectively set the direction for the global healthcare world for the next twenty to thirty years: The Astana Declaration (Kazakhstan, October 2018); the World Health Organization (WHO)'s World Health Assembly (WHA, Geneva, May 2019); and the upcoming Global Conference on Universal Health Care (New York State, September 2019). Moreover, the WHO's department of Traditional Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCI) is supporting non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the World Naturopathic Federation (WNF) to ensure that Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) is an integral part of the future direction of healthcare.

This article will discuss recent and upcoming events, which will significantly impact the future of traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM). The author will discuss the role of the naturopathic profession, and actions to ensure that we are part of the global healthcare conversation.

According to the WHO and the United Nations, the approach to integration of T&CM in health care is based on three facets: products, practices, and practitioners.¹ Although in many countries, ministries of health have only focused on integrating T&CM products into the health care system by regulating natural health products, and a few have focused on creating a seamless system where T&CM is on par with allopathic medicine, in most countries there is still a lot of work to be done on all three facets. Although there are many challenges to recognizing and integrating T&CM into the healthcare system, the tremendous demand for T&CM from civil society is having a substantial influence.¹

Astana Declaration

The WHO was formed in 1948. The first Global Conference on Primary Health Care was held in 1978. At that time *The Alma-Ata Declaration* (1978) was signed with the understanding that "Health is a fundamental right."² The Alma-Ata was the first international declaration underlying the importance of basic primary health care (PHC) for all. The outcome of this conference helped to shape the global healthcare landscape for forty years.

In 2008 the WHO published *The World Health Report*, which was a review of the present global healthcare status and which highlighted the poor health outcomes of many communities, including health inequities between and within countries.³ Ten years later, the Global Conference was held in Kazakhstan October 25th and 26th. 2018. The

conference was attended by 2000 delegates spanning 120 countries from all world regions. The delegation represented world leaders, state members, health experts and global organizations to discuss the future of health-care.⁴ The WNF was fortunate to be one of only a few T&CM professional groups to be invited and attend. At the conference the *Astana Declaration* was approved, which will influence international healthcare policies for the next twenty or thirty years.

The draft *Astana Declaration* was posted for comment one year prior to the conference. Although the global naturopathic profession supported the main concepts in the Declaration, the draft document did not include reference to traditional medicines or traditional knowledge. The draft document also included a prescriptive list of what practitioners qualified as PHC and it did not leave any room for T&CM practitioners.

Comments and recommendations were requested from world leaders, industry, healthcare professionals and from civil society. The WNF responded, and over twenty naturopathic organizations and institutions from around the world followed suit. As a result of the input of the global naturopathic profession and other T&CM organizations, the final *Astana Declaration* included traditional knowledge, traditional medicines, and the listing of primary health-care workers was modified to allow for all trained practitioners.

During the 2018 Global Conference on Primary Health Care the following observations were shared based on the current global healthcare environment:⁴

- Health is correlated with economic growth and development. Countries with low economic status often have the most healthcare challenges.

- In the last forty years there has been an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in maternal and child mortality. There has also been a decrease in many infectious diseases, and the ability to manage of HIV has improved. Yet, the progress has been uneven and unfair globally.
- There was also an acknowledgement that too much focus in the last forty-years was placed on treating specific diseases at the expense of prevention and addressing the determinants of health.
- The main current challenges include an aging population, anti-microbial resistance (AMR) non-communicable diseases (NCD) and a rise in mental health concerns globally.

The focus of the Conference was to discuss what was required to ensure primary health care for all (see social media hashtag #PrimaryHealthCareForAll) and universal health coverage (see social media hashtag #UHC). Many of the concepts discussed during the Conference are directly in-line with naturopathic principles including a focus on:³

- Prevention
- Patient-centered health-care
- Patient-education
- Determinants of health
- Self-responsibility and sustainability
- Need to embrace technology, including e-health and tele-health.
- Increase collaboration and cooperation between the public and private healthcare systems and between different aspects of healthcare.
- Harnessing of integrative healthcare and multi-disciplinary teams
- PHC must be driven by country context including specific socio-demographic variances in each region

The *Astana Declaration* is an ongoing process with requests to governments, organizations and individuals to confirm their commitment and to outline their action plans: <http://apps.who.int/primary-health/commitments/>. The WNF is continuing to work with member organizations to ensure that the naturopathic profession stays involved.

72nd World Health Assembly (WHA)

Each year in May, health ministers from 194 countries get together in Geneva Switzerland to discuss global health concerns, how to achieve universal health care and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as determined by the WHO.⁵ This year there were two very significant events for the T&CM professions, including naturopathic. The first was a WHO TCI side event and the second was a resolution that was adopted on T&CM. Both of these events helped to support the inclusion of T&CM as part of the new global universal health care (UHC) strategy.

The WHO TCI department held a side-event where they invited governmental delegates from member states all six WHO regions – Iran, India, China, Turkey, Curaçao, Ghana and Cuba and six T&CM NGOs, including the WNF. During the meeting they released the *WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019*.¹ This report is the most comprehensive report on T&CM with 179 out of the 194 Member States officially contributing to the information. The report states, “Traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) can make a significant contribution to the goal of UHC by being included in the provision of essential health services... Improving equitable access to safe, quality and effective T&CM services can potentially meet communities’ needs and build sustainable and culturally sensitive primary health care.”¹

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, in the foreword of the report, states: “Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) is an important and often underestimated health resource with many applications, especially in the prevention and management of lifestyle-related chronic diseases, and in meeting the health needs of ageing populations. Many countries are seeking to expand coverage of essential health services at a time when consumer expectations for care are rising, costs are soaring, and most budgets are either stagnant or being reduced. Given the unique health challenges of the 21st century, interest in T&CM is undergoing a revival”.

The governmental delegates described how they have incorporated T&CM into their country’s healthcare strategy. The side-event also included a round-table discussion involving NGOs that discussed the key challenges in the T&CM implementation strategy. The main points included the concerns and misconceptions around research in the T&CM field, the fact that T&CM makes a distinction between “health” and “healthcare” and that it puts a significant focus on health promotion. It was highlighted that T&CM is an acceptable, accessible and affordable form of essential care available to people across cultures and across economies including indigenous / remote populations while acknowledging social, environmental and spiritual elements.

The second significant event that occurred during the WHA was that during a planetary session on Friday, May 24th, Document A72/70 when the resolution “*Preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage*” was adopted. This resolution contained a paragraph of interest for the naturopathic profession. It stated, “The Seventy-second World Health Assembly, URGES Member States: to consider integrating, as appropriate, safe and evidence-based traditional and complementary medicine services within national and/or subnational health systems, particularly at the level of primary health care, according to national context and priorities.” http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA72/A72_70-en.pdf

Primary Health Care (PHC) refers to medically trained practitioners that can diagnose and treat acute conditions, thus decreasing death from diseases that are treatable. (*It is not the same definition that we use when we say we are Primary Care Practitioners*) is important that

The naturopathic definition to some terms in the Astana Declaration differs from the naturopathic perspective. For example, according to the WNF:

- Naturopathic practitioners generally see prevention as including reducing the risk of symptoms and diseases as well as supporting the naturopathic healing ability of the body. It involves addressing the determinants that affect Health Promotion and educating patients on how to live a life that supports their constitution and unique susceptibilities. Naturopathic clinical practice emphasizes the importance of addressing lifestyle, social and environmental factors of health.
- Likewise, the WNF's definition of "Determinants of Health" falls under "Health Promotion" and states: "Naturopathic practice recognizes that health and disease are logical, complex and multi-factorial. The goal of naturopathic care is not only to reduce and treat disease, but to optimize health and well-being. The naturopathic perspective of Health Promotion is broad and recognizes the importance of a number of determinants including lifestyle, social relationships, environment, external, medical interventions, genetic and gestational factors as well as a person's personal essence."

Ensuring the Naturopathic Profession is "Part of the Conversation"

Ensuring that the naturopathic profession is part of the global healthcare conversation is imperative. To do this, the WNF and its member organizations from around the world need to:

- Continue to support and encourage naturopathic research
- Continue to codify the knowledge within the global naturopathic profession
- Establish official collaboration status with the WHO
- Participate in AMR & NDC initiatives
- Promote the global initiatives around consumer education and naturopathic community clinics
- Take an active role in the discussion on environmental health

Another key initiative that the WNF has undertaken in the compiling of a Health Technology Assessment (HTA) on the naturopathic profession. An HTA is an internal review of a profession. It generally results in the compiling of a 400- to 500-page textbook. An HTA can only use research created within a profession and it is focused on

outlining the practice, costs, safety, and effectiveness of naturopathic practice. It will determine the 'box' into which the WHO and governments put the naturopathic profession.

This is an exciting time for the global naturopathic profession. The tide is changing towards T&CM and naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is well positioned to take a lead role in this change. The WNF will update the profession on the outcome of the September United Nations conference. 🌱

Language is key — follow these hashtags on social media:

#WNF_info, #PrimaryHealthCareForAll, #Naturopathic, #Prevention

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About the Author

Dr. Iva Lloyd, BScH, ND is a Naturopathic Doctor and Registered Polarity Practitioner. In 2002 she founded Naturopathic Foundations, an integrated clinic with four naturopathic doctors and other alternative health care providers that blend the naturopathic and energetic aspects of health care.

Dr. Lloyd is currently president of the World Naturopathic Federation and is past-chair of the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors. Dr. Lloyd teaches part-time at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. She is the author of three books: *Building a Successful Naturopathic Practice*, *Messages from the Body*, a guide to the Energetics of health, and *The Energetics of Health*, a naturopathic assessment. Dr. Lloyd writes for various journals and gives seminars internationally on naturopathic medicine, the role of the mind in healing and the energetics of health.

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