



Geriatric and Longevity Medicine

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It's been quite a 2020 at *CAND Vital Link*. As we are in production for this edition in late December, we are seeing new public health restrictions in many areas across Canada, and along with most Canadians, we hope that as a profession we come out of this pandemic with increased regard for our community, for social determinants of health, for mental health, and health equity. We are a resilient profession, and we have much to offer the Canadian health care system as it transitions to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Canadian naturopathic community, there is big news this month with the merger between the two Canadian ND programs at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM) and Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine (BINM). We've brought in an update for our members from the President of CCNM, Bob Bernhardt, about what the amalgamation will mean for students and faculty in both programs, as well as for the greater Canadian naturopathic community. He points to increased opportunities for our career researchers to collaborate and develop protocols that will be designed to support naturopathic best practices, while maintaining our emphasis on wholistic, patient-centred care.

This issue is focused on Geriatric and Longevity Naturopathic Care. There has been a revolution underway in the past few decades at how we perceive aging, in both good ways and bad. In many ways, our profession has been 'ahead of the curve' by our promotion of healthy and sustainable diet, exercise and connection with nature, community, and spiritual pursuits. For naturopathic doctors, these aren't just words on a checklist, but primary ways we engage with our patients in practice.

On the other hand, the COVID pandemic has brought unpleasant revelations about the level of care we give to our seniors, both in the community at large as well as assisted living or long-term care (LTC) facilities. In their guest editorial for this issue, emerging Canadian ND voices on seniors' care, Erika Buckley-Strobel and Romi

Fung, argue that there is an urgent need for more comprehensive naturopathic clinical training in this area, and, make a compelling case for increasing the number of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities—courses, mentorships, residences—focusing on this area of care.

Buckley-Strobel expands on this argument in her practice article, where she proposes greater integration of naturopathic medical services into existing community care for seniors and lays out how this would complement existing primary care and deliver cost savings to the conventional system. We have practice reviews from Fung about current evidence for curcumin as a treatment for cognitive decline in seniors, and from Duizer on using VO₂ max testing as a clinical tool for designing exercise programs to increase lifespan. Our final practice article is from Bhavraj and Lander at CCNM on naturopathic care of older patients who have been discharged from conventional cancer treatment, but are often still struggling with disability and ongoing morbidity. As the authors point out, there is much we can offer these patients to improve their quality of life and healthspan. Finally, we have an original research study from an NUNM team lead by Hourston. This study evaluated ND student's self-assessed competency, comfort and training needs for working with patients with disabilities as they progressed through their clinical training. As the authors point out, this is the first study of its kind to evaluate ND education in care for patients with disabilities. Its conclusions indicate that a re-evaluation of the ND curriculum in this area may be warranted to help better prepare students to work with this important patient population.

Looking ahead to 2021, we encourage our *CAND* members to be engaged with *CAND Vital Link* as we move to a quarterly format this year. Upcoming editions and deadlines for 2021/2022 will be posted in the Members' area of the *CAND* website soon, along with PDF copies of our Submissions Guidelines and an (upcoming) Guide for early career writers on how to develop their expertise in writing for professional publications such as ours and the blinded peer review process. We are always happy to mentor new writers, as part of our ongoing work to develop the journal as the independent and credible voice of the Canadian naturopathic medical community.

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