

The Value of Going Digital for Canadian Naturopathic Doctors and Researchers



Ellen Conte^{1,2}

The *Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors Journal (CANDJ)*, formerly *Vital Link*, has been the journal of the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors (CAND) for over 25 years, but this edition is different. This is the first digital version of the Association's publication. This may seem a small or even inevitable change to many, but it is an important step in the direction and future of the *CANDJ* and naturopathic doctor (ND)-led research in Canada. The move to a digital format allows for greater access and readership, opens up the opportunity for scholarly database indexing, reduces barriers to publication for ND researchers, and supports the inclusion of evidence and research in naturopathic practice.

The digital platform for the *CANDJ* immediately allows for greater reach and readership, which will enhance knowledge translation, the process by which research findings are shared and implemented, which is ultimately the goal of all research. Although publication is an important aspect of knowledge translation, it is only effective if it is accessible. The online format will allow for more people, especially those outside of the CAND, to find and read the journal.

The most important extension of this enhanced discoverability is the potential for scholarly database indexing, making papers accessible through common databases such as PubMed, Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar.¹ For research to reach the health-care providers and researchers who could use the information (often referred to as the end user), the paper needs to be discoverable. Most of us turn to well-known databases such as those mentioned, but only journals indexed by these databases will be found through their search engine. Thus, indexing is essential for research to have an optimal impact, and the move to a digital platform is the first step in this process. Indexing is also considered a reflection of the quality of the journal; databases typically only accept journals of sufficient quality. Thus, the very act of becoming indexed enhances the perception of journal quality. Lastly, indexing is important for the individual authors. The greater reach their work gets, the greater their individual impact can become. Thus, indexing will help to attract high-quality submissions as authors will receive the recognition they deserve for their work.

The *CANDJ* provides a location for ND clinicians and researchers to publish their work in a peer-reviewed journal without an article processing fee. This eliminates a common barrier to

research and publication, which could encourage more NDs to share their findings. The more NDs participate in research and sharing findings, the stronger the profession will be.

All of these aspects—greater readership, scholarly database indexing, and an avenue for ND-led research publication—ultimately support and enhance the inclusion of research into naturopathic practice and health care in general. Isn't that the ultimate goal of research, to change and improve the way we care for our patients? The more we study, write, publish, and share, the stronger the foundation of our medicine becomes.

Research on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies has boomed in the past couple of decades,² and journals like the *CANDJ* provide the opportunity for NDs to publish research findings and contribute to the growth of CAM evidence. The move to digital represents an exciting advancement for the journal, with great opportunities for the future. Congratulations and thank you to Editor Marianne Trevorrow, and many others who worked to make this transition happen. Naturopathic research continues to expand and shape how we practise, and this is another step in that trajectory.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

¹Centre for Health Innovation, Ottawa, ON, Canada.

²Patterson Institute for Integrative Oncology Research, Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, Toronto, ON, Canada.

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Correspondence to: Ellen Conte, 429 MacLaren St, Ottawa, ON K2P 0M7. E-mail: econte@thechi.ca

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