

CAM Concepts

Individualized Treatment

(Disclaimer: This mini-review is intended to explain this naturopathic concept and is not intended to discuss the evidence supporting it)

(Naturopathy)

Theory

Naturopathic medicine adheres to a philosophy that each person must be evaluated and treated as an individual. While an accurate diagnosis is important, it is the unique aspects of each patient, along with contributing factors from the external environment that are assessed to form the foundation of an individualized treatment plan. The treatment for two patients with the same diagnosis could therefore be significantly different from each other.

Practical application

In order to create an individualized treatment plan, the naturopathic physician must obtain several pieces of information. First an accurate diagnosis must be made. Then, “obstacles to cure,” factors that can block the body’s ability to heal itself must be identified. Next, the patient’s concerns, priorities, and values must be elucidated and taken into consideration when formulating the treatment plan. Finally, the naturopathic physician will create a treatment plan utilizing usually multiple therapeutic modalities, all specifically chosen to address the unique aspects of the patient’s problem, with the intention to promote the healing capacity of that patient. An example will illustrate this approach:

Patient A is diagnosed with atopic dermatitis. Based on the individual aspects of the case (high intake of wheat, dairy and refined CHO, sugar craving, and very low fat vegetarian diet), the ND recommends a wheat and dairy free elimination diet, and supplements of essential fatty acids, zinc, and chromium.

Patient B is diagnosed with atopic dermatitis. Based on the individual aspects of this case (concurrent asthma, multiple past courses of antibiotics for frequent bronchitis, constipation, very low water intake), the ND recommends a botanical tincture to support lung function, a recommendation to increase water and fiber intake for better colon and kidney elimination functions, daily sauna to increase eliminations through skin, and supplements of essential fatty acids and probiotics.