Primum Non Nocere — First Do No Harm

Session #4

NATP121

Naturopathic Philosophy, Principles and Practice
...I do not approve of anything forced and violent...The gentlest application is the best...and if I can obtain my purpose with one application only, I ought not make use of a second one. We must help...the diseased or weakened organism gently, not rigidly and impetuously; we must, as it were, lead the sick body softly and gently by the hand, sometimes assist and support it more firmly, but not urge it too much, not drag and push it; we must not insist absolutely upon obtaining a certain thing by our remedies, but only co-operate with the body in accomplishing its work, and then give up this gentle, and gentlest co-operation, as soon as ever the body is able to help itself proceed alone.

~Father Sebastian Kneipp, My Water Cure
Primum Non Nocere
Definition

Naturopathic physicians follow three precepts to avoid harming the patient:

1. Naturopathic physicians utilize methods and medicinal substances that minimize the risk of harmful effects, and apply the least possible force or intervention necessary to diagnose illness and restore health.

Zeff & Snider, AANP, 1989
**Primum Non Nocere**
First Do No Harm

- The use of natural remedies/therapies that are as close as possible to their natural, whole state are far less likely to cause adverse reactions or side-effects.
Primum Non Nocere
First Do No Harm

• The level of health intervention should be appropriate to the patient’s needs at the time.

• Naturopaths are guided by the concept of the Therapeutic Order when determining the appropriate level of intervention for the treatment plan.
Primum Non Nocere
Definition

2. Whenever possible the suppression of symptoms is avoided as suppression generally interferes with the healing process.

Zeff & Snider, AANP, 1989
Primum Non Nocere
Definition

3. Naturopathic physicians respect and work with the Vis Medicatrix Naturae in diagnosis, treatment and counseling, for if this self-healing process is not respected the patient may be harmed.

Zeff & Snider, AANP, 1989
Primum Non Nocere
First Do No Harm

• This consideration must be given to:
  – Diagnostic methods
  – Treatments
  – Counselling or advice

• Harm may occur:
  – Physically
  – Emotionally
  – Psychologically
  – Spiritually (?)
The most important requirement of the art of healing is that no mistake or neglect occur.

~Ch’i Po
Iatrogenic Illness

Illness caused by medical examination or treatment, by the actions of physicians or surgeons.
Iatrogenic Illness

In 2000, iatrogenic illness was found to be the 3rd leading cause of death in the US, causing approximately 225,000 deaths per year. Almost half of these deaths were caused by adverse effects of correctly administered medications.

Barbara Starfield, MD, MPH (JAMA, 2000)
Iatrogenic Illness

• There were 7,820 deaths from complications of medical and surgical care in Australia in 2002. This was 5.8% of all Australian deaths in 2002. (AIHW National Morbidity Database, Australia’s Health 2004, AIHW)

• There were 68,913 hospitalizations in Australia in 2001-2002 for complications of medical and surgical care. (Australian Hospital Data, AIHW, Australia, 2001-02)
Healthcare is a risky business. Simply being a patient in an acute care hospital in Australia carries, on average, a 40-fold greater risk of dying from the care process than from being in traffic, and a 400-fold greater risk than working in the chemical industry.

Iatrogenic injury is costly; at least 10% of admissions to acute-care hospitals in Australia are associated with a potentially preventable adverse event. It has been estimated that the direct medical costs of these events exceeds $2 billion per year.
Iatrogenic Illness

Natural therapists can cause or contribute to iatrogenic illness too!
The conventional treatment of acute diseases is suppressive and not curative.

~Lindlahr
Lindlahr’s Five Stages of Inflammation

- Incubation
- Aggravation
- Destruction
- Abatement
- Resolution and reconstruction
Inflammation

- **Incubation** – period of time where the conditions for an inflammatory reaction are developing (morbid matter, toxins, poor nutrition, abnormal cellular function/structure, micro-organisms)

  - Incubation is coexistent with the 3 primary manifestations of disease:
    1. Lowered Vitality/VF
    2. Abnormal composition of blood & lymph
    3. Accumulation of waste material. Morbid matter, toxins
Inflammation

• **Aggravation** – body’s inflammatory processes initiated (via VMN) to rectify the imbalanced situation; body responds to the challenge of a health threatening scenario; signs & symptoms of inflammation (swelling, redness, temperature/fever, discomfort) increase.

Image credit: Wikimedia Commons
Inflammation

- **Destruction** – inflammatory processes cause damage to micro-organisms, morbid matter, cellular tissue; accumulation of exudates, breakdown products of inflammation, puss formation ➔ sore, boil, abscess, etc

  - As long as the inflammatory phase is acute (managed effectively & not suppressed) the destruction of healthy tissue will generally be very minimal & the tissues will be restored
Inflammation

- **Abatement & Absorption** – if the acute healing reaction is supported (not suppressed) the inflammatory response will correct the acute imbalance.
  - Support Vital Force, optimise nutrition, enhance elimination
  - Appropriate nutrition, fluids, rest, hydrotherapy to support VMN

Inflammatory response will abate (reduction in swelling, discomfort, redness, temperature), usually some discharge occurs.
Inflammation

• **Reconstruction** – once inflammatory processes have declined, VF can be focused on the role of restoration of damaged tissue and optimisation of tissue/organ function
  – Appropriate nutrition, modification of lifestyle habits to address disturbing factors – to prevent recurrence of the healing reaction.
Lindlahr’s Five Stages of Inflammation

• Incubation
• Aggravation
• Destruction
• Abatement
• Resolution and reconstruction
How Is Suppression Defined?

• To prevent the development, action, or expression of

• To prevent or inhibit a process or reaction
. . . the very symptoms the good doctors have suppressed and turned into chronic disease were the body's only means of correcting the problem! The so-called "disease" was the only "cure" possible!

~Dr. Philip Chapman (1981)
Suppressive Treatments

The more acute conditions are suppressed, the greater will be the incidence of chronic diseases.

(Lindlahr, 1922)
How Diseases Have Changed Over Time

The ‘Epidemiological Transition’
(‘The sweet spot’)
mid 20th Century

Economic growth

Acute diseases

Chronic Diseases

YLD
(years of life with a disability)

Total Deaths

Infectious Disease Deaths

Adapted from Egger G 2012, Lifestyle, Environment & Metaflammation

© Endeavour College of Natural Health  endeavour.edu.au 26
What About Palliation?

• To make a disease or its symptoms less severe or unpleasant without removing the cause
Palliation vs. Cure

- Both can appear similarly at times—symptoms will decrease
- Attention to the state of any discharge is one key to knowing which is happening
- Knowing the potential actions of your therapies is also key
Hippocratic Roots

As to diseases, make a habit of two things: to help; or at least to do no harm.

Nature never needs instruction; don’t do too much.

To do nothing is also a good remedy.
Restorative Practices

• Sleeping, resting and playing
• Breathing deeply
• Eating nutritive, whole foods
• Drinking plentiful, clean water
• Fresh air, sunshine, and time spent in nature
• Connecting with our higher power
It's supposed to be a secret, but I'll tell you anyway. We doctors do nothing. We only help and encourage the doctor within.”

~Albert Schweitzer, M.D.