



S.53 - Senate Health and Welfare Committee
Wednesday, February 7, 2018
Joshua D. Green ND, President, VANP

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the Senate Health and Welfare Committee regarding the very timely and necessary subject of Universal Access to Primary Care,.

My name is Dr. Joshua Green. I am a naturopathic physician. I have been in practice for just over 10 years and have a primary care practice in Burlington. I am the owner and Medical Director of my practice where we have a patient list of just over 1,000 patients. In addition, because I am evidently not a fan of having a social life, I am also the President of the Vermont Association of Naturopathic Physicians (VANP), and the VANP House of Delegates Representative to the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (in effect our Congress).

Almost half of our patients are on Medicaid and many are very financially limited. Every day, I hear from patients how the stress of their finances and the ever-rising cost of health care contribute more to their anxiety, and over all stress (and I see it in their rising blood pressure!). For my patients, and for myself as a health care consumer, I hope that Universal Primary Care can become a reality,

Here are some startling statistics from the CDC's 2015 data

- The nation's leading cause of death (853,800 people) is from cardiovascular disease
 - 633,842 people died from heart disease
 - 140,323 people died of stroke
 - 79,535 who died of diabetes.
- Heart disease was the primary diagnosis for 15.3 million people at their doctor's office appointment, and 1.9 million people at the hospital out-patient department.

The efficacy and cost-benefit of naturopathic medicine in cardiovascular disease was illustrated in a study conducted for the Canadian Postal Workers union, which found that the risk of a cardiovascular event over the next 10 years was reduced from 10.8 percent to 7.7 percent in workers who received naturopathic care. This translated into a cost savings of over \$1100 per employee in medical claims and worker productivity combined.

Cardiovascular disease is largely a preventable disease, modified by changes in lifestyle and diet, and occasionally physician-prescribed natural or conventional medicines. Naturopathic doctors excel in, and are specially trained in, clinical nutrition and state-of-the-art laboratory testing for both identifying and monitoring improvement in risk factors of cardiovascular disease.

The hand-out that I've prepared for you on Efficacy and Cost Effectiveness of naturopathic medicine also highlights additional areas of cost saving with naturopathic medicine, such as a reduction in annual medical claims in Washington state among users of integrative medicine and an internal Blue Shield study that estimated that a **naturopathic-centered managed care program could cut the costs of chronic and**

stress-related illness by up to 40% and lower costs of specialist utilization by 30%. This study, commissioned by Blue Shield of Washington was the basis for that insurer to credential naturopathic doctors as primary care physicians for their HMO products. And finally, closer to home, a VT Automobile dealer's Association program of naturopathic care found impressive reductions in blood pressure and other cardiovascular risk factors among their employees.

One of the main aims of increasing access to Primary Care Physicians (PCPs) is to decrease the higher costs of patient visits to Specialists, Urgent Care, and the Emergency Department. We agree with increasing the access to all PCPs, including naturopathic physicians. This will further aid patients in modifying risk factors for the leading costs of morbidity and mortality that are at the forefront of our current health-care crisis, and thus decrease the burden of cost to the State of Vermont and all of the taxpayers contributing to the rising cost of health care.

Thank you.