

COUNCIL ON NATUROPATHIC MEDICAL EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

Saturday, October 15, 2016 ♦ 2.30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

The Churchill Hotel ♦ Washington, DC

MEETING NOTES

Board members present:

- Brian Andrew, JD, MA (Public Member), Chesterfield, Missouri;
- Hugh Bonner, PhD, FASAHP (Public Member), Rome, Georgia;
- Jasmine Carino, ND (Profession Member), Toronto, Ontario;
- Margot Gregory, ND (Profession Member), Tucson, Arizona;
- Melanie Henriksen, ND (Institutional Member Rep., NCNM), Portland, Oregon;
- Thomas Kruzel, ND (Profession Member), Scottsdale, Arizona;
- John Pecchia, CPA (Public Member), Poughkeepsie, New York;
- Marcia Prenguber, ND (Institutional Member Rep., UBCNM), Bridgeport, Connecticut;
- Steven Rissman, ND (Profession Member), Broomfield, Colorado;
- Leslie Solomonian, ND (Institutional Member Rep., CCNM), Toronto, Ontario;
- Jamey Wallace, ND (Profession Member), Seattle, Washington; and
- Christina Woolard, ND (Profession Member), Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Staff present:

- Daniel Seitz, JD, EdD (Executive Director), Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Overview

Facilitator Laura Rasar King and Dr. Seitz provided background presentations on issues related to accreditation and strategic planning.

The group engaged in a modified SWOT analysis and brainstorming session about the naturopathic medical profession in general and the CNME, using the following categories to organize ideas:

- Political
- Economic
- Technology
- Socio-Cultural
- International
- Legal
- Environmental

While there was not enough time during the retreat to utilize the results of the SWOT analysis and brainstorming in order to begin work on developing a strategic plan, the group agreed that the background information and the participant input (see below) provided a good start for work on a strategic plan. It was agreed that the Strategic Planning Committee should meet before the May 2017 CNME meeting to review this input and continue work on developing a strategic plan.

Participant Input

Political:

- The ACA presents some opportunities for the ND profession
- It's essential for the profession that CNME remain in good standing with the US Dept. of Education (USDE)
- Concern: the CNME may be forced through USDE regulations to engage in some actions we do not consider to be useful or worthwhile
- Co-optation of aspects of natural medicine by allopathic medicine and other healthcare fields is a challenge (e.g., functional medicine)
- There is steadily increasing recognition for the naturopathic field
- NDs generally lack sufficient human resources for engaging in effective lobbying
- Lack of widespread licensing in the US impedes the growth of profession
- The profession needs a financially viable PAC; we have the Institute for Natural Medicine (INM) which funds projects, but it is basically just getting started
- There's a lack of public funding for naturopathic medicine—both in regard to training of doctors and delivery of care
- The legal scope of practice does not match training in most jurisdiction; it is usually narrower
- Some proposed legislative changes in higher education may prove detrimental to ND programs
- NDs and naturopathic medicine are held to different, higher standard of scrutiny than in conventional medical fields—this is a challenge
- We have the opportunity to collect outcomes data to demonstrate effectiveness
- There's a perception of lack of evidence for naturopathic medicine
- Our professional associations are involved in promoting political change for our field with varying success
- We need to raise awareness and respect for profession, but we're challenged by infighting
- Expansion and licensure of the field is a slow process
- Naturopathic medicine is held to a different standard (e.g., one death attributed to ND care can be devastating); we are challenged by the inherent bias against any new paradigm
- One of our strengths is that natural/naturopathic medicine appeals to a broad cross-section of American Society
- Another strength is that we've gained some inclusion & recognition by the NIH
- A threat is a lack of (or slow) change in the political landscape, which slows down ND recognition
- USDE recognition is a strength, but changes in requirements may prove challenging
- Weaknesses: lack of a financially viable PAC; insufficient human resources for lobbying

International:

- USDE and other US regulations that affect the CNME may impact Canadian practices and accreditation (and potentially other international institutions)
- Should there be a “one size fits all” set of standards for ND education?
- CNME is occasionally contacted about accrediting programs outside of the U.S. and Canada: Would this be useful to do or even feasible?
- Accreditation of programs in countries other than the US and Canada may support the development of naturopathic medicine internationally

Economic:

- Accessibility of Naturopathic Medicine (and training) to socio-economically diverse population can be a challenge
- Admissions process and practice management are important to success of practitioners
- CNME’s federal recognition is important to the success of the field
- Other fields co-opting the ND profession may hurt us financially
- Cost of compliance with laws and regulations has a financial impact on CNME, the schools, and practitioners
- The high cost of ND education vs. the expected return on investment has led to a decrease enrollment at the schools
- Cost of healthcare is both a challenge and opportunity
- Employment opportunities for ND are not very plentiful
- The disparity in medical insurance coverage for MDs vs. NDs is a challenge
- Group based medicine in delivery of naturopathic care may be a favorable model for us
- The high tuition of ND education has a negative impact on building the field
- A challenge and opportunity it to gain inclusion for NDs in the VA and Medicare
- There’s a comparative lack of research funding and grants for naturopathic medicine, which impacts credibility
- More federal recognition would increase ND status
- One of the unfavorable larger economic trends is reduced applications across the board in higher education
- There’s no strong financial base (e.g., PAC) for naturopathic medicine
- There may be opportunities to nominate NDs to serve on research panels
- We’re largely excluded from the healthcare insurance system
- Major opportunities for NDs are incorporation into the VA system, recognition by Medicare, mandatory insurance reimbursement for ND services
- Encouraging collaborative residencies and residencies outside of naturopathic medicine is important
- The concept of return on investment (ROI) is important to consider: What are the schools doing to ensure that students are getting a good ROI for their education?
- ND salaries are generally problematic
- Our field has limited sources of funding
- ND institutions are largely tuition dependent; non-tuition funding constitutes a relatively small percentage of revenue

- Strengths of our field: it's not allopathic medicine; it provides more complete care; there's an emphasis on wellness; the CNME is recognized by the DOE
- Threats to our field: cooptation by the conventional medical system; lack of licensing in many jurisdictions; lack of recognition in important federal programs (e.g. Medicare)
- Tuition for ND programs is high relative to the salary that most NDs earn
- Weaknesses of our field: we not part of the health insurance system; decrease in employment opportunities; high tuition rates
- NDs don't own the modalities; any other field can use them
- We need to define more clearly what it is that NDs do

Legal:

- A dialogue with institutional accreditors might be useful
- Expanding the ND scope of practice to include prescription authority is an important issue for the field
- There is comparatively little federal recognition of the ND profession
- NDs are held to an unreasonable standard of perfection in comparison to conventional MDs
- Healthcare regulations are becoming more burdensome
- CNME's requirements do not demonstrate how well students are trained to prescribe pharmaceuticals
- Given that NDs have sought (or have) prescription authority in a number of jurisdictions, maybe this aspect of the standards should be more detailed

Technology:

- Assist in getting products to market
- Conflicting philosophies between natural medicine and technology/modern medicine
- Emerging educational technology may be helpful for ND education
- We need to stay abreast of emerging trends in educational technology
- Emerging trends in medicine – genetics, procedure oriented
- The future role of online delivery in the training of naturopathic doctors needs to be addressed
- Industry partnerships provide opportunities to schools and the profession
- Is natural medicine antithetical to technology
- Within our field, there's a lack of resources to fund technology
- Opportunities include: partnerships with industry and nutraceutical companies to help get their products to market; telemedicine
- Opposition and threat: distance education programs in naturopathy
- Technology may allow for a possible reduction of residential requirements in programs
- Reducing residential requirements by embracing technology should be considered
- A strength: ND medicine is technologically savvy
- Impact of telemedicine on emerging fields – role of academic medical centers
- Telemedicine can be an opportunity or threat for naturopathic medicine
- A weakness in our field is lack of financial resources to fund technology

Environmental:

- The widespread environmental problems that impact health provide opportunities for NDs

Socio-Cultural:

- Access to naturopathic medicine care is an issue
- Natural medicine is well positioned to address issues around an aging population
- Naturopathic medicine Appeals to broad segment of society
- Some consider naturopathic medicine to be an elitist field of medicine
- We are a small, but relatively cohesive profession
- The profession needs to come together and get a handle on integration: what it means and how to do it
- We need to increase the diversity of patients; currently, they are mostly Caucasian, female, professional, higher income
- We need to increase the diversity of students; currently, they mainly Caucasian and female
- Diversity of students and patients, and accessibility of the education and clinical services, are important issues
- Should we look at specialized health programs?
- We need to be aware of emerging trends in medicine
- Our emphasis on wellness is a strength
- Even in licensed states, many people are not familiar with naturopathic medicine
- Do we fight or integrate with conventional medicine? How do we deal with cooptation
- Is functional medicine coopting us or giving us better exposure?
- Inter-disciplinary education is important
- Lack of diversity in the students and patients (women, young, middle age): What can be done to address this?
- Concerned that we're losing ground to other professions
- Gaining mandatory insurance coverage is an important goal for NDs
- MD education neglects natural/naturopathic medicine
- We need to be strategic about positioning the profession in the emerging healthcare market
- Effective professional branding is important
- The reality of ND education in this country is that we lack diversity; AANMC has identified diversity as a major agenda item for future discussion
- Regional accreditors sometime have a diversity component in their standards (board, faculty and student diversity)
- Shift in value of education
- Favorable trends in public awareness of natural medicine
- We are not allopathic medicine and should not try to be
- NDs have the skills to potentially work with many different populations

Potential Implication for CNME:

- Are there types of data we could collect or require the schools to collect that would support the profession?

- How do ND programs demonstrate and the CNME verify that effective learning has taken place?
- How do we measure/demonstrate the success of graduates?
- Should CNME's standards be revised to better support the expansion of scope to include prescribing authority?
- Is there a way to demonstrate naturopathic medicine's impact on health?
- Can naturopathic medicine be integrated into other types of academic programs
- Can we leverage any data we currently or could collect to approach VA, NIH, states, and so on to expand recognition, licensing and opportunities for NDs?
- How does the CNME make sure that graduates are qualified?
- To what degree can we/should we try to quantify outcomes?

Brainstorming:

- Data compilation: there are problems with EMR, quantification of data at the singular level (doctor/student input)
- Expanding scope of practice to include Rx authority—CNME requirements do not demonstrate how well students are trained in this area. Maybe this should become a more prescriptive CNME requirement. Accreditation standards can be used to support changes in scope of practice
- If something is not specified in the competencies it's not going to happen
- Patient-reported outcomes data to be compiled on Promise VA system—built on Epic for the schools that are using this
- Quantifying outcomes for the education that can translate into demonstrating the impact of the practitioners
- Raising respect and awareness for the profession on all these fronts
- What is the appropriate level of involvement of the CNME in pushing the field to advance?

Some Next Steps:

- Define CNME's constituencies and how we can most effectively serve them
- Keep an eye on possible changes in USDE regulations governing accreditors and schools in order to be proactive in developing our standards and policies
- Leverage the requirements of the USDE regarding the compilation of data to support the profession
- Restructure CNME website to address the needs and interests of various constituencies (e.g., schools, potential students, patients)