



Naturopathy: the evidence is clear

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A new, world-first, systematic scoping review has found that high quality evidence exists for naturopathic medicine. The study undertaken at Southern Cross University confirmed a whole-system multi-modality approach to healthcare is effective for a wide range of health conditions.

The review looked at 33 studies and found that naturopathic treatment results in clinically significant benefits for cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal pain, type 2 diabetes, polycystic ovarian syndrome, depression, anxiety, and a range of complex chronic conditions.

Blackmores Institute Director Dr Lesley Braun said: “This is a particularly poignant study when the government is looking at removing health insurance rebates for natural therapies. This comprehensively shows the use of natural therapies is effective and can also help prevent more serious health issues that can place a major burden on the public health system. As a result, this new research casts doubt on the government’s position about removing naturopathy due to the absence of evidence.”

“Prevention isn’t just better than cure, it also could be cheaper than cure! The research shows the breadth of conditions where naturopathy can have a positive impact. Interestingly it is often in areas where other treatments have offered limited success,” she said.

The studies’ results concur with an earlier review conducted in 2015 by [Oberger et.al](#) who found universally positive trends in favour of naturopathic medicine - concluding that there were positive outcomes and improved quality of life in individuals with, or at risk for chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, chronic pain, anxiety, hepatitis C and menopausal symptoms.

The primary modalities used in naturopathic medicine are dietary and lifestyle interventions, specific botanical medicines and nutritional supplements. The aim is to provide an environment internally and externally where the body can perform optimally to restore, heal and rebalance itself. There is large body of evidence available to support this approach when you draw from both traditional and scientific evidence.

“However, there is a distinct lack of well-conducted pragmatic trials evaluating the complex intervention of whole-system, multi-modality naturopathic care. In the absence of whole-system data, the only way to effectively and objectively evaluate a discipline is to assess its major therapeutic tools. Until substantively more whole-system research is undertaken, evaluating the effectiveness of naturopathic medicine requires a combination of both these types of evidence,” the authors stated.

Importantly, the review noted an earlier Australian study found that a range of nutritional supplements and botanical medicines (the ‘tools of trade’) demonstrated benefit at the highest level of evidence and have proven efficacy.

“In conventional medicine, evidence for the effectiveness of their ‘tools of trade’ (pharmaceuticals and surgery) is generally considered sufficient to demonstrate the effectiveness of its practice. By comparison, a recent governmental review of naturopathic medicine in Australia judged the practice of naturopathic medicine solely on the scope of whole-system research limited to only systematic reviews containing randomised controlled trials published since 2008. Based on this limited scope, they concluded that naturopathic medicine’s overall effectiveness could not be proven, and the Government has proposed exclusion from private health insurance effective from April 2019.’

“The global naturopathic research landscape contains a small but expanding body of practice-based whole-system multi-modality research. There is a need for pragmatic, real-world trials in which complex naturopathic treatment is compared with usual care to build a high-quality evidence base on the effectiveness of whole-system multi-modality naturopathic practice,” the authors concluded.

Source:

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