



Naturopathic Doctors and Pain Relief

Chronic and acute pain is one of the most common complaints seen in medical practice. Ineffective pain control and relief has led to 300 billion dollars in lost productivity, including missed days from work.

As a consequence of pain, there has been a galloping increase in the prescription use of opioid pain relievers, leading to unintended consequences, such as increased addiction and drug abuse.

Naturopathic doctors use a variety of safe and effective therapies to relieve pain which in head to head studies show at the least a similar pain relief, with an increase of quality of life, diminished costs, fewer missed work days, and best of all no addiction to prescription medications. Some of the studies include:

1. In one trial, naturopathic therapies were estimated to save nearly \$1,000 per patient with low back pain. Importantly, missed work due to illness diminished by 6.7 days, leading to return on investment of 7.9%. (Herman PM, Szczurko O, Cooley K, Mills EJ. Cost-effectiveness of naturopathic care for chronic low back pain. (2008) *Altern Ther Health Med* Mar-Apr 14 (2):32-39.)
2. In a CAM pain clinic, naturopathic doctors achieved a 60% pain reduction. (Secor ER, Markow MJ, Mackenzie J, Thrall RS. Implementation of outcome measures in a complementary and alternative medicine clinic: evidence of decreased pain and improved quality of life. (2004) *J Altern Complement Med* 10: 506-513)
3. In a RCT study on rotator cuff tendinitis in postal workers, naturopathic doctor therapies decreased pain by over 54%, better than other arms in the trial, as well as diminished disabilities. (Szczurko O, Cooley K, Mills EJ, Zhou Q, Perri D. Naturopathic treatment of rotator cuff tendinitis among Canadian postal workers: a randomized controlled trial. (2009) *Arthritis Rheum* 61: 1037-1045)
4. In a RCT, naturopathic therapies were compared to standard therapies for low back pain and were found to significantly benefit patients, both in decreasing pain and increasing range of motion, and were at the very least comparable to standard therapies, yet without the use of prescription medications. Quality of life improved significantly. (Szczurko O, Cooley K, Busse JW, Seely D, Bernhardt B. Naturopathic care for chronic low back pain: a randomized trial. (2007) *PLoS One* 2: e919)
5. In a pilot clinical trial at an HMO, naturopathic doctors showed significant decrease in temporomandibular jaw pain as compared to standard care. (Ritenbaugh C, Hammerschlag R, Calabrese C, Mist S, Aickin M. A pilot whole systems clinical trial of traditional Chinese medicine and naturopathic medicine for the treatment of temporomandibular disorders. (2008) *J Altern Complement Med* 14: 475-487)

An example of this approach is found at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, where the Pain Relief Center is housed, using a collaborative interdisciplinary approach of NDs, MDs, and acupuncturists. Contact person: Paul Mittman, ND, EdD; President/CEO Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine. p.mittman@scnm.edu