



COLORADO MEDICAL SOCIETY

"ADVOCATING EXCELLENCE IN THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE"

NATUROPATHS

HB 13-1111 Sponsors Representative Ginal and Senator Newell

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HB 13-1111 goes far beyond allowing a naturopath to practice naturopathy.

The CMS and other associations are strongly opposed to naturopaths being licensed by the state of Colorado as health care providers. This bill allows unqualified persons to practice several health care professions, including medicine. Under the bill, a person who attends a school of naturopathy would be allowed to diagnose, treat, operate and prescribe for disease, pain, injury or other physical or mental condition. Naturopaths are defined in the bill as "a system of primary health care practices for the prevention, diagnosis, evaluation and treatment of injuries, diseases, conditions of the human body." This is the definition of the practice of medicine.¹

Background

The bill creates the Board of Naturopathic Medicine (Board), an effort that has been defeated repeatedly in this General Assembly. According to the 2011 sunrise report there are less than 150 naturopaths that would fall under this bill. Moreover, there are a plethora of titles and educational programs that exist in the arena of naturopathy --many other individuals that have not completed the 4-year degree that practice as naturopaths in the state.

It would create a type one board, providing unlimited authority for this Board to promulgate rules and regulations.

It would allow a naturopath to prescribe controlled substances through a formulary, created at the discretion of the Board, perform minor surgical procedures, administer local anesthetics, and use electrical and other methods for repair of lesions and lacerations.

This bill allows for the performing of surgical procedures using a laser involving superficial tissues including the eye, ear, tendons, nerves, veins and arteries.

This bill would allow for the diagnosis and treatment of pediatrics from infancy on.

Importantly, this bill provides that the naturopath is **not** required to communicate or cooperate with a physician or other health care provider unless requested by the patient.

This bill allows for the exemption of liability insurance so patients harmed will have no recourse.

This bill allows naturopaths to refer to themselves as "N.M.D's" which will confuse and mislead the public.

¹

The "practice of medicine" is defined as holding out one's self to the public within this state as being able to diagnose, treat, prescribe for, palliate, or prevent any human disease, ailment, pain, injury, deformity, or physical or mental condition... [§12-36- 106(1)(a), Colorado Revised Statutes]. Suggesting, recommending, prescribing, or administering any form of treatment, operation, or healing for the intended palliation, relief, or cure of any physical or mental disease, ailment, injury, condition ... [§12-36-106(1)(b), C.R.S.]. Performing any kind of surgical operation upon a human being...[§12-36-106(1)(e), C.R.S.]



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The bill requires a four-year degree with no requirement for residency, and an average of only 720 hours of training. The people who graduate from these schools are not adequately trained to become treating physicians would be given the title "Practicing Naturopathic Healthcare Provider" or "Natural Health Care Practitioner".

The bill will allow "healthcare providers" who are not adequately trained to, among other things, perform surgery, prescribe controlled substances and treat pediatric patients.

Since 1996, 20 different states have rejected licensing initiatives, including 12 states that have rejected initiatives more than once. This includes Florida, which stopped licensing naturopaths due to the threat of public safety by allowing uneducated naturopaths to prescribe medication, perform surgery, and diagnose and treat patients.

There has been no consumer driven demand for licensing naturopaths in Colorado. Colorado should not become one of the few states to pass this type of legislation.

Discussion

The prerequisites for becoming a naturopath do not adequately prepare a person to perform the acts that the scope of practice would allow.

A medical doctor receives the following training:

- A Bachelor's degree in science;
- Four years of graduate education (medical school);
- Labor-intensive residency program consisting of hands-on clinical practice from 3 to 7 years (12,000 to 17,000 hours of training).

In addition, many physicians complete a fellowship lasting two to four years and consisting of more clinical, hands-on practice.

A naturopath would be allowed to perform the same acts as a physician, but is not required to receive the intensive training necessary to be a physician.

Conclusion

The Colorado Medical Society, as well as many other physician associations, believes that it is imperative for the safety and welfare of patients and the general public that naturopaths not be licensed by the state of Colorado as health care practitioners. They simply do not have the education or training needed to safely treat patients. The Colorado Medical Society strongly opposes HB 13-1111.

CMS Asks for your NO Vote on HB 13-1111

Supported by:

**Colorado Medical Society
American Academy of Pediatricians, Colorado Chapter
Colorado Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians
Colorado Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons
Colorado Society of Anesthesiologists**