

Editor's Note: Below is a personal description of the seminar from one member's point of view.

WANP FALL SEMINAR: Honoring Naturopathic Methods As we Gain Political Finesse

By Brian Peters, ND

Powerful and balanced, the most recent WANP Continuing Education Seminar showed once again how much courage and patience is being expended to strengthen and unite our profession, particularly concerning insurance coverage for Naturopathic Physicians. The presentations centered on insurance coverage and patient co-management, but the real heat was the divergence of opinions of how Naturopathic Physicians should approach the issue of becoming part of the system.

From the details of how to work together with insurance companies, to tidbits of how to coordinate care between NDs and other physicians, to eloquent, impassioned appeals to search our heart before offering our soul, the weekend seminar offered multiple opportunities to realize that as Naturopathic Physicians we are still in charge of our destiny.

There were the presentations regarding state-mandated insurance coverage, and how to encourage insurers to comply with that law. There were cautions to not lose our special and unique style of medicine and special relationships with our patients. Clearly

Lobbyist Report

New Naturopathic Words: Medicare and Medicaid

By Jeff Larsen, WANP Lobbyist

Medicaid funding and program responsibility is currently being debated in Congress. Early drafts of this Federal legislation will shift the administration and significant funding to the states, which will be accomplished by Federal block grants to each state. While President Clinton is considering a veto of this legislation, there is a strong possibility that legislation will eventually pass that dramatically alters the Medicaid program.

Naturopathic Physicians should be prepared for any Medicaid shift to Washington State. This may lead to an opportunity for Naturopathic Physicians to provide care to Medicaid-eligible recipients.

The Congress seems ready to grant states maximum flexibility in writing their own rules and regulations, including which providers will be able to provide services to Medicaid recipients. The WANP must be ready to respond

quickly to this new Medicaid program to ensure access to Naturopathic care by Medicaid-eligible patients. Treating these patients opens doors to providing services in a vast array of other practice settings, including clinics and training sites.

The WANP is positioned to address the Medicaid transfer if it is handed to the State of Washington. However, it will take the strong effort of all Naturopathic Doctors and their patients to ensure success.

If you are a WANP member, make an effort to acquaint yourself with your State Senator and two State Representatives. I also encourage each doctor to participate in the Patient Coalition for Naturopathic Doctors legislative program. (See article below.)

More information in the next *Bulletin* on other legislative issues, including efforts on the any willing provider insurance legislation. ♦

Please see page 15 for New Insurance Billing Codes

some NDs will welcome the opportunity to work within the mainstream, just as some will maintain complete autonomy.

Throughout the seminar, the message was clear: have faith in your medicine, practice the style you want, but become proficient in dealing with the new political realities being forged by insurance companies, health care corporations, and the government. The

goal of the seminar was to empower all Naturopathic Physicians to practice their unique art of medicine within these new political realities and, at the same time, to encourage us to be supportive of each other. The same clarity of purpose that we show within our group will be the guiding factor others judge us by, as we merge into the larger milieu of modern health care. ♦

PATIENT COALITION SUPPORTS NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS IN LEGISLATIVE AND INSURANCE REFORMS

The Patient Coalition is an organization consisting of Naturopathic patients who are working to ensure NDs have full primary care equality. Please see enclosed insert for a form to be printed on 3.5x5 cards and put on your front desk. As insurers solicit for more customers (insured lives) letting the companies know what patients want is more crucial than ever before. Encourage your patients to fill out these cards and work with the organization to protect and expand their access to naturopathic care. Patients can sign-up to help with phone calls, letters, etc. Mail the completed cards to the WANP office. Thank you. ♦