



VOTE NO ON HB 3721 - AN EFFORT TO LICENSE NATUROPATHS AS PHYSICIANS

The physician members of the Illinois State Medical Society respectively urge you to vote "NO" on House Bill 3721, a measure that would license naturopaths as physicians.

The education and training of naturopaths does not sufficiently prepare naturopaths to provide medical care, which will have adverse effects on patient safety here in Illinois. Under HB 3721, naturopaths would be allowed to provide a full range of medical services to patients in Illinois, including prescribing Schedule II substances/medications such as opioids, caring for children, those with chronic conditions like diabetes and cancer, and providing specialty care, such as gynecological services.

Naturopathic education focuses much of its attention on botanical medicine, homeopathy, hydrotherapy and counseling. There is no consistent application of evidenced-based principles and scientific study for naturopathic treatments. The mechanism of action and the efficacy of many naturopathic treatment modalities are not scientifically supported, yet continue to be offered to patients.

Naturopaths will tell you that their education and training is similar to that of a medical doctor. That is not the case. Under HB 3721, the education required to be licensed as a naturopath would include attending a naturopathic accredited four-year school, which includes only 4,200 hours of "clinical training," which is just simply time spent observing other naturopaths.

Physicians, by contrast, not only must complete a four-year undergraduate pre-medical program followed by a four-year medical school program, with two years of that program committed to clinical training, but they also must complete a hospital-based residency program lasting three to seven years.

The residency program is the hallmark of complete medical training, a requirement that must be completed by physicians before they can practice independently. Physicians often remark that they cannot imagine practicing before completing a residency, which lasts for three years for some specialties, like family practice and internal medicine, and seven years for other specialties. The depth and breadth of knowledge acquired from this experience cannot be compared to clinical rotations. Physicians in residency will spend 50-80 hours a week for a minimum of three years treating patients and acquiring the practical and diagnostic skills to provide medical care.

There is no residency program that naturopaths are required to complete. They simply complete limited clinical hours, which again, only entails observing other naturopaths; Naturopaths do not have the sufficient training to provide safe and effective medical care.

Attached for your review is an article written by a naturopath who has since left the practice because she realized that naturopathy is not medicine.

For these reasons, we respectively urge you to vote "NO" on Senate HB 3721.