

Martha's Monthly  
July 2007  
Penguins with garlic breath and Alberta's naturopaths

If you have ever tried to get a five year old to eat spinach then you will feel the pain of the Shanghai zookeepers who are trying to get their penguins to eat garlic (see: [penguin story](#)). The zookeepers are resorting to stuffing the garlic into fish (something Martha doubts would work as well for five year olds) because the penguins need the garlic and they are fussy eaters (just like every five year old Martha knows). See, penguins are prone to respiratory problems in the summer heat and garlic has proven helpful in warding off infections. Martha loved the idea of using garlic, "it's an ounce of prevention." "More like a clove of prevention," joked Henry.

Martha smiled at her husband's attempt at humour and began thinking about all the politicians to whom she would love to feed a garlic-stuffed fish. See, in general, politics is not about prevention as much as it is about reacting to problems. But, occasionally, politicians ask for advice before they pass a law so they can ward off potential problems with the legislation. So when the Standing Committee on Community Services met for the first time on July 4<sup>th</sup> and decided to ask for public input on the Health Professions Amendment Act **before** it is drafted, well Martha could smell the sweet smell of prevention!

The Health Professions Amendment Act (Bill 41) is a bill that will add some new regulations to the original Act. The new regulations will cover, among other things, Naturopathic Doctors. A Naturopathic Doctor, [according to the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors](#), is "a primary care practitioner who seeks to restore and maintain optimum health in their patients by emphasizing nature's inherent self-healing process." People concerned about allergies, chronic diseases, and nutrition counseling, among other things, frequently choose to consult a Naturopathic Doctor (ND). They are, for many people, part of an illness prevention and health promotion lifestyle.

In Alberta the Health Professions Act (HPA) covers naturopaths and 29 other professions. The Act has a lot of regulations that go along with it and naturopaths are having their regulations written right now. That makes this the perfect time to tell the politicians why naturopaths are important to us. And if you are a woman, chances are better that you have a naturopath. According to [Statistics Canada](#), women are three times more likely than men to see a naturopath.

NDs are highly trained and skilled practitioners. Naturopathic Doctors [in Alberta](#) who are registered with the Alberta Association of Naturopathic Practitioners have completed a minimum of three years of pre-medical university studies and four years training at an accredited naturopathic medical school, and have passed licensing examinations.

But without regulations, anyone can call themselves a naturopath and it is up to consumers to be knowledgeable. A recent survey in Ontario found that 18% of the

population has used a naturopath and twice as many would use one if they were assured that the naturopath was regulated. The regulations being drafted in Alberta will regulate who can call themselves a Naturopathic Doctor, what they can offer a patient, what they can prescribe, and what tests they can order.

NDs offer preventative health care to their patients in much the same way as the Shanghai zookeepers offer preventative care to their penguins. The bill that will regulate NDs has had first reading only. Now is the time to prevent regulations that would restrict the ability of NDs to offer their patients a full range of services. Politicians need to hear what you think about Naturopathic Doctors and why you have used one, or would use one. Offer a little garlic to the politicians by writing to them about why a naturopath is an important part of your health team.

As always, Martha has provided a letter you can just copy and paste into an email but this time you might want to add some personal thoughts on Naturopathic Doctors. The key points you want to get across are:

- \* Naturopathic Doctors are important to you, as they are an important part of Alberta's health care system.

- \* Naturopathic Doctors should have the services they provide articulated in the regulations so that the service they now provide will continue to be offered.

- \* Naturopathic Doctors should also have the ability to offer additional services not already provided like the ability to order tests, prescribe natural medicines, and provide intravenous treatments.

Send your emails to Premier Ed Stelmach, the Minister of Health David Hancock, the chair of the Standing Committee on Community Services Richard Marz, and the Opposition Critics Laurie Blakeman, Weslyn Mather, Raj Pannu, and Ray Martin: [premier@gov.ab.ca](mailto:premier@gov.ab.ca), [edmonton.whitemud@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.whitemud@assembly.ab.ca), [richard.marz@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:richard.marz@assembly.ab.ca), [edmonton.centre@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.centre@assembly.ab.ca), [edmonton.millwoods@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.millwoods@assembly.ab.ca), [edmonton.strathcona@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.strathcona@assembly.ab.ca), [edmonton.beverlyclareview@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.beverlyclareview@assembly.ab.ca), [marthasmnthly@yahoo.ca](mailto:marthasmnthly@yahoo.ca)

July 8, 2007

Dear Premier Stelmach and Minister David Hancock:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the creation of the Standing Committee on Community Services. I am pleased that they have been charged with the Health Professions Act regulatory changes because I am deeply interested in the regulations regarding Naturopathic Doctors and wish to ensure that they have the ability to offer me a wide range of services and treatments.

GOOD PLACE TO PUT IN A PERSONAL PIECE ABOUT YOUR OWN  
EXPERIENCE WITH NATUROPATHS.

It is important that Naturopathic Doctors are able to provide their patients with the range of services that they have already been providing as well as additional services like ordering tests, administering intravenous treatments and other treatments that their patients require. Naturopathic Doctors are an integral part of the health care system and I value the contribution that they have made to my health.

Please ensure that Naturopathic Doctors are regulated and given a wide scope of practice in order to meet the needs of their patients.

Sincerely,

Your name and full address