

NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR SAFETY STATISTICS

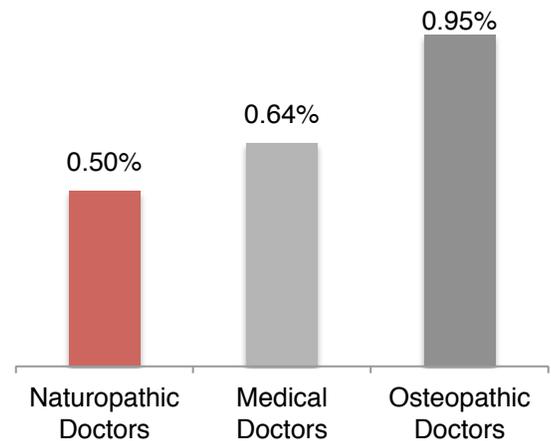


In 2013, the federal government acknowledged the safety and effectiveness of naturopathic medicine by passing a resolution designating the week of October 7-13 as Naturopathic Medicine Week to “recognize the value of naturopathic medicine in providing **safe, effective, and affordable health care.**”¹ The California and nationwide data undeniably support the US government's 2013 resolution.

California’s nearly 500 practicing naturopathic doctors have a pristine safety record – there have been **no cases of patient harm** caused by naturopathic doctors in California since licenses were first issued in 2005.

Throughout the US, naturopathic doctors have maintained an excellent history of patient safety. In Washington, a state that began licensing NDs in the 1930s and has a broad scope of practice that includes minor office procedures and independent prescription rights, has had only 25 disciplinary actions against naturopathic doctors in the last 10 years. This represents 0.5 % of the ND population in Washington. During the same time period, there were 23,317 disciplinary actions taken against medical doctors, representing 0.64% of Washington MDs. Osteopathic doctors were also cited more frequently than NDs; there were 56 actions against DOs from 2001-2011, representing 0.95% of the population – nearly double the rate of naturopathic doctors.² Other states with broad scopes of practice for NDs boast similar rates.

Figure 1. Disciplinary Actions as a Percent of Profession, Washington State 2001-2011



Malpractice insurance claims can be used to further assess the risk of updating the scope of practice for naturopathic doctors in California. According to NCMIC, the leading provider for naturopathic malpractice insurance, **premium rates for naturopathic doctors average approximately 30-40% lower than primary care medical doctors.** Furthermore, NCMIC has never opened a claim based on an allegation against a naturopathic doctor involving prescription medications. Bruce Beal, Vice President of Claims at NCMIC, wrote the following in a 2010 letter:

“[NCMIC] entered into the ND market in 2001 offering [malpractice] coverage to NDs in all states that recognize and license the profession. I believe that to be 15 states plus the District of Columbia at the present time. In addition, NCMIC insures four of the five naturopathic colleges in the United States.

In the years that NCMIC has been insuring Naturopathic Doctors and the colleges, we have never opened a claim based on an allegation against a Naturopathic Doctors involving prescription medications. We have seen several claims involving adverse reactions to herbals or a combination of herbals reacting with a drug prescribed by a medical doctor.”

The National Practitioner Databank, a statistical database maintained by the US Department of Health and Human Services, has **no records of malpractice claims against naturopathic doctors** in the United States. According to the Databank, there were 16,925 malpractice payments made in California from 2002-2012, amounting to more than \$2.7 billion. None of those malpractice payments were attributed to naturopathic doctors. A 2013 nationwide search by Verdict-Search also found no records of malpractice suits against naturopathic doctors.

Safety is an important factor to consider when new legislation is being proposed. Based on the national safety data, updating the Naturopathic Practice Act (SB907) to enable California NDs to practice to the full extent of their training and education will increase patient access to safe, effective primary care.

¹ S.Res. 135. Congress.gov, <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th/senate-resolution/135>.

² "Health Professions Regulatory Activities (UDA) Reports." Washington State Department of Health, <http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/HealthProfessionsRegulatoryActivitiesUDA.asp>.