



Dave James, ND

1. What started your pathway in naturopathic medicine?

In 2008, I left a position at a country club where I was in management. I was going back to school to finish my undergraduate degree. Instead of going to Hawaii and a Division II scholarship to run, I chose the University of Bridgeport, close to where my newborn niece and my sister were living in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I stumbled upon the integrative medicine clinic there with chiropractic care, naturopathic medicine and acupuncture - and my running went to a whole new level under the care of a licensed naturopathic physician there. Then from

there, I ended up in Arizona and enrolled in what was then called Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine.

2. What skills or experiences have been most valued in your professional growth, and what advice would you give to early career doctors?

I actually am an early career doctor myself. I'm only a year into practice here, but what skills I think that I have and that I think are important are authenticity and honesty with my patients - and listening.

A lot of the visits that I now conduct as a licensed healthcare professional, I do a whole lot more listening than talking. Patients really want to be heard. I had a patient yesterday here in Park City, Utah, and at the end of brain camp week, his entire memory was focused on the fact that we spent time with him in that week. You know, it wasn't rushed in and out for like a 15-minute visit review of systems. It was all about the time with the physician. And I think that's the most important thing that our profession brings, as naturopathic physicians, is that hopefully we've built our business models so that we do allow time and space for our patients.

3. What do you like most about being a naturopathic doctor, and what are some of your challenges?



What I like most about being a licensed naturopathic physician is the freedom to work within a healthcare system where I get to do what's best for my patient. I get to really make shared decisions with my patients.

Of course, patients are the leaders of their own healthcare. My role is to help them connect with their own healing abilities and support them in making positive changes. Using my training and experience, I guide and motivate them along the way, helping them overcome challenges and move toward their optimal health and well-being.

There are many challenges. As an early career physician, I'm trying to kind of take one for the team of naturopathic medicine, and I've gone through the residency program. The biggest challenge with that is livable wages for residents. That's been a little bit of a challenge to lifestyle and the ability for me to practice what I preach and access to the different modalities of care that I want to give myself. But finishing up this PGY1 postgraduate residency year and getting credit is so that our profession, in the future, can grow.

4. What makes your membership with AANP valuable as a naturopathic doctor?

The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians is a super valuable membership. Like any profession, we need strong organizational leaders with a mission and vision that we all as professionals can believe in. Ever since I was a student and I was first introduced to the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, I felt that the lineage of leaders and board members and the staff at AANP really have the patient's best interest in mind, and through that, a trickledown effect to advance us, the licensed naturopathic physician profession, to grow. You know, we're licensed in 26 states right now, with hopefully more on the way.

The organization is wonderful, tremendous. Everything from Lobby Day at DC FLI - which I participated in last year and got to go to Capitol Hill - to resources for malpractice insurance and starting a new business. There are so many valuable opportunities.

And, you know, in a lot of the conventions, it's a way to meet the elders, a way to ask other licensed naturopathic physicians and doctors what their challenges and obstacles have been. So, it's a wonderful group of people.

5. How do you maintain balance between work and personal life?

Well, I'll give you an example of what I did this week. I woke up a little bit earlier than maybe my warm bed would have liked, and laced up my sneakers and, you know, dodged the moose of Park City and got a little trail run in. And that balance not only allowed me to be the best version of myself as a healer and a physician for my patients, but also really grounded me into some of the hard discussions that we have to have with patients. So, to me, it's practicing that, that core



principle of Nature Cure and being able to be out on the trails in the mountains or any fresh air when I'm back in Seattle at my inner city clinic, you know, just getting the dog out for some fresh air, green grass, smells of rain, mostly (in Seattle), but, yeah, it's mostly just nature for me.

6. What do you think is important for the naturopathic profession to take note of? What are trends or changes you are seeing?

That is a really great question, and also a challenging one. What I'm noticing is that naturopathic medicine is increasingly becoming part of broader conversations about healthcare. We're seeing it firsthand. There is a growing national discussion around the difference between a system focused primarily on managing illness and one that emphasizes prevention, longevity, and overall quality of life.

We are seeing increased interest in concepts like health span and long-term wellness, and it's important that these ideas are accessible to everyone, not just those with significant financial resources. Ideally, all communities should have access to trained, licensed, and qualified healthcare professionals who can support individualized care. I'm optimistic that healthcare will continue moving toward models that prioritize personalized decision-making and meaningful, one-on-one decision making between providers and patients

7. Is there anything else we've missed that you feel is important?

I think it's a wonderful profession, and I encourage folks and potential patients that haven't established care with a licensed naturopathic physician to think about it like taking care of your car, right? You know, insurance is going to pay for if something goes wrong on the road while you're driving, but we're still responsible to pop the hood every once in a while, take that car in and get the oil changed, and put gas in the tank.

And to me, that's what naturopathic medicine and naturopathic physicians can really give patients who are worried about the cost – if it is an out-of-pocket, cash pay based system – you're investing in your health, and what it comes down to is really nothing can replace health. There's no monetary value for feeling good and living your best life, so that you can go out and help members of your community out there. So those of you who are hesitant about having to pay for any sort of health care out of an insurance network, we hear you. We're working hard in following the models of states like Oregon and Connecticut and Washington, where there are some insurances and low income funded places. But in the states that don't have that yet, reach out to naturopathic physicians. We have ways, through nonprofits and different things, to overcome some of the barriers to entry into the office.



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