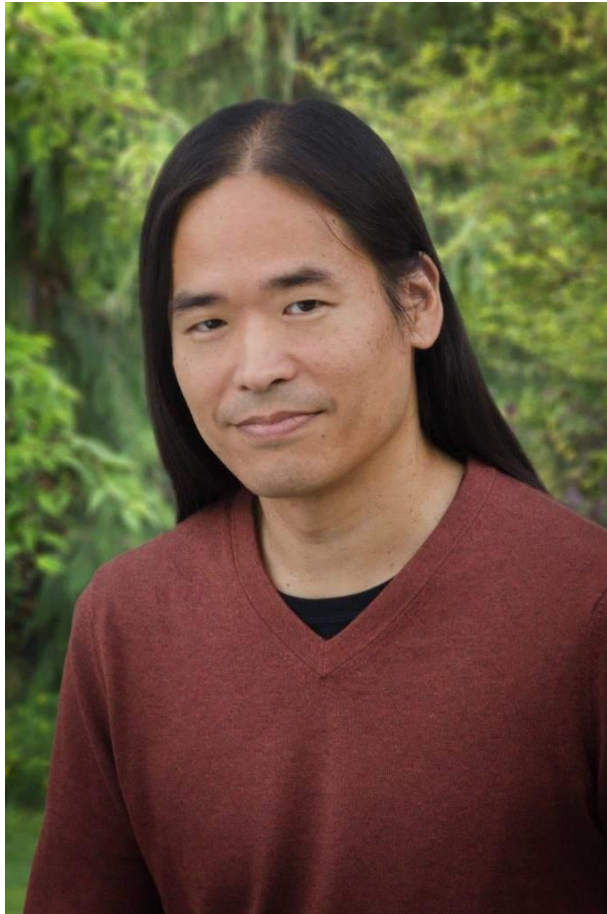




Gregory Yasuda, ND

What started your pathway in naturopathic medicine?

A lot of it had to do with how I grew up. We had a big vegetable garden, shopped at the health food stores, and made use of botanical medicines. My grandmother immigrated from Japan and didn't speak English, but she grew plants like aloe vera at her house and made use of them extensively, including drinking fresh aloe juice daily.

I got my undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from Cal Poly but, by the time I finished the program, I had already decided that I didn't want to be an engineer. The very first Jamba Juice store had opened two blocks from my house, so I began working there part time during school and then started managing after I graduated. As the business grew, I became the product development manager and was asked to develop a proprietary line of nutritional supplements to add to the smoothies. This led to me meeting lots of

people in the natural products industry, becoming the de facto office herbalist, and ultimately led to me meeting my first naturopathic doctor at a trade show. That was the first time I realized that I was way out of my depth by formulating from books I found at the local coop! That ND sent me home with a copy of The Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine and two weeks later I was laid off and given a severance package and the rest is, as they say, history.

What skills or experiences have been most valuable in your professional growth - and what advice would you give to early-career doctors?

I hated physical medicine. During my first week of ND school, I remember having a hard time finding the greater trochanter, looking around at my classmates and feeling like I was the only



one struggling and then thinking that either there was something wrong with me or that phys med simply was not for me...or both! Well, long story short, after being in private practice for 10 years I was hired as core faculty at Bastyr University in, of all things, physical medicine.

Even by the end of school, the only patients I was able to help were by using physical medicine, usually visceral manipulation and craniosacral. My strategy in life to that point was to find what I was good at, and then do that. This was the first time my strategy failed, and I had to lean into my weaknesses to grow into the healer I always wanted to be. I learned that medicine isn't just something that you do – it's something you embody. It's an art and a science...we talk a lot about the science but perhaps not enough about the art. Physician heal thyself entails not just hard work gaining knowledge but engaging in personally difficult work which for me meant, among other things, learning some self-compassion. Anything I wish for my patient, I may need to model for them.

It's easy to have an idea about what we want. In fact, most students do what I did in school, which is to think about what we want our practice to look like. But the more important question is: what are my patients going to need from me. The answer to those two questions are not often the same, in my experience.

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

I love the principles of our medicine. I came to naturopathic medicine looking for the truth. So much of the knowledge we base medical practice on is constantly changing. What can we count on? What is true? What can I do for my patients where I don't have to worry that someday I'll have to apologize that we just didn't know about these side-effects 10 years ago? That's what the principles and philosophy provide me with.

The challenges are relatively benign. Like many others, it can be frustrating to feel like we are not regarded like medical doctors. I have to remind myself that I didn't want to go to conventional med school or to become a conventional doc...so I can't very well expect to be treated like one! I'm a naturopath and wouldn't have it any other way.

Another challenge is that the world really wants to make naturopaths like conventional doctors. Patients ask me how I treat their disease. Often continuing education revolves around how to treat diseases. That just seems to be what medicine is...but that's only half of what naturopathic medicine is. The other half resides at the bottom of the Therapeutic Order, it's where we work to



restore health rather than simply fight disease, and I think this is the greatest gift that NDs can provide to the world right now: not just fight disease but also restore health.

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

AANP membership has value because it creates Community! Even in Seattle where we are blessed to have many practicing NDs, even as full time faculty at Bastyr University, this is still a tiny profession, and it can feel a little lonely sometimes. Coming to the conventions and staying connected to my colleagues keeps me going, inspires me, and helps me to be better.

How do you maintain balance between work and personal life?

I think the most important thing is to do things you love, things that bring you joy. I love my work – I really, really do, so I need other things that I love just as much or else I will never make time for them. For me right now, that means family, of course, and also music. I can't wait to go work on that song I have half-finished! I honestly don't know how to prioritize things that I'm not excited about. I suppose that's where willpower and discipline come in – going to the grocery store and taking out the trash. But at any given moment I might be thinking about a patient I've seen while playing my guitar, or I might be singing in my head while working with a patient, or talking to loved ones about an new song idea or how my day was...I don't know if that is technically called balance, but that is when I'm happiest.

What do you think is important for the naturopathic profession to take note of?

AI is making algorithmic medicine obsolete. What do we have to offer? Foundational naturopathic medicine. Sticking to the foundational components of health. Being a witness to people's suffering. Bill Mitchell, ND, is one of my heroes and he said that "in the ideal world, people are each other's medicine." Human to human connection will not be replaced entirely by AI. We will always need each other.

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