

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5605

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 28, 2005

Title: An act relating to naturopathic physicians.

Brief Description: Regulating naturopathic physicians.

Sponsors: Senators Thibaudeau, Pflug, Keiser, Deccio, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Shin and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/24/05, 2/28/05 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Thibaudeau, Vice Chair; Benson, Brandland, Franklin, Johnson, Kastama, Kline, Parlette and Poulsen.

Staff: Stephanie Yurcisin (786-7438)

Background: Naturopathy is the practice of diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of disorders of the body by stimulation and support of the body's natural processes. The practice includes manual manipulation; the use of nutrition and food science; physical modalities; homeopathy; hygiene and immunization; and the administration, prescription, and use of medicines of mineral, animal, and botanical origin.

Naturopaths may use medicines that are derived from animal organs, tissues, and oils; minerals; and plants. They may also use legend vitamins, minerals, whole gland thyroid, and other traditional herbal and botanical pharmacopeia. The Washington Administrative Code interprets this to include legend topical ointments, creams, and lotions containing antiseptics as well as legend topical, local anesthetics. Naturopaths may also use intermuscular injections of vitamin B12 preparations.

Summary of Bill: The term "medicines of mineral, animal, and botanical origin" is replaced with the term "naturopathic medicines." The medicines that naturopaths may use includes vitamins, minerals, botanical medicines, homeopathic medicines, hormones, and legend drugs and controlled substances that are consistent with naturopathic medical practice established by the Secretary of Health in rule.

The current prohibition on controlled substances is revised to permit the use of codeine and testosterone products in Schedules III, IV, and V of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act. The Secretary, in consultation with the Naturopathic Advisory Committee and the Board of Pharmacy, will establish requirements for the use of controlled substances, including educational and training standards.

The definition of "minor office procedures" is modified to include care and procedures for lesions as well as injections of substances consistent with the practice of naturopathic medicine and rules established by the Secretary. The definition of "common diagnostic procedures" eliminates references to superficial scrapings and prohibitions on surgical procedures and restates the prohibition as applying to incision or excision beyond a minor office procedure.

Naturopathic education programs are required to be accredited.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill makes minimal changes in the naturopath's scope of practice; all of these changes were recommended by the Department of Health in its sunrise review. It would save healthcare dollars by allowing naturopaths, who have lower fee structures, to treat patients who would prefer them to be the primary care provider. The prescription authority is only minimally expanded under this bill, and the over 4,000 hours of schooling that a naturopath must complete is sufficient to prepare them.

Testimony Against: The training level for a naturopath is lower than that for a standard physician, so as a result they order more tests and are not always correct in their diagnosis. Although the classes during the educational training are titled similarly, the content is very different. This would allow naturopaths to prescribe drugs that the Secretary of Health approves with advice from the naturopath's board, which is a conflict. If we want to improve patient safety we need to focus on alternative treatment providers like naturopaths.

Who Testified: PRO: Terry Kohl, Kasra Pournadeau, Janile Martin, Washington Association of Naturopathic Physicians; Gannady Raskin, Bastyr University.

CON: Kathleen Collins, Washington Academy of Family Physicians; Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association.