

SECTION I

Living organisms are self-healing entities. Health is the body's normal state.

Section 1 overview

What is Nature Cure and What Is Its Role³ in Naturopathic Medicine?

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FOR COUNTLESS MILLENNIA, the resources provided by nature have sustained us. Sunlight, air, water, minerals, and plants have been the basic requirements of all animal life. Throughout time, living organisms have evolved the capacity to use these essentials for energy, growth, and repair. These resources also have been the principle tools available to healers in many traditional and contemporary world medicines.

Beginning in the early Middle Ages, western culture's reliance on these basic resources declined, as humankind attempted to improve on nature's medicines with galenicals (medicines made from natural ingredients) and, later, with synthetic compounds. However, as 19th-century worldviews in science and medicine evolved, so did interest in the ancient concept of vitalism (the idea of a self-regulating capacity inherent in all living things) and a general realization that 'only nature heals.' This sowed the seeds for early nature cure practitioners to employ their accumulated clinical experience and tacit knowledge gained through practice, to rely on earth's simple resources for health and healing.

This abbreviated history helps illuminate:

- how current naturopathic medical practice evolved from the observations and practical applications of early nature cure practitioners,
- how the philosophical foundations of naturopathy have evolved into a variety of basic nature cure therapeutics, and
- how the various modalities and practices of nature cure align with the clinical theory of naturopathic medicine.

Throughout this discussion, we highlight four main points about nature cure:

Nature cure is both a philosophy and a practice. It evolved through a strong empirical tradition that laid the foundation for modern naturopathic medicine. In his book, *Everybody's Guide to Nature Cure*, Harry Benjamin (1936) described nature cure as, "a philosophy of healing built up and elaborated as a result of many years of patient investigation and research into the nature and causes of disease." Throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries, incorporation of nature cure in naturopathic practice has declined and has been replaced with increased reliance on other treatment methods. Yet, nature cure remains fundamental to naturopathic practice, and its philosophy and modalities must be strengthened in current naturopathic medical education and training.

Nature cure practices evolved largely through empiricism.

Nature cure became an empirical science in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and has developed into a rational system of health care throughout the last 150 years. Today, many nature cure practices are supported not only by

empirical analysis, but also further validated through the Scientific Method. Advanced knowledge about the effects of the internal and external environments on human physiology, for example, now support the empirical observations of early nature cure practitioners. Although knowledge accumulated from empirical practice tends to be discarded in medicine, the editorial policy for this book is that such knowledge should be documented, since its exclusion from medical practice loses valuable clinical knowledge for current and future generations.

Nature cure embodies naturopathic philosophy in practice. As you will read throughout this book, nature cure practices can be traced from classical antiquity to present-day clinical applications.³ Part of this evolution has included assimilating the key goals of naturopathic medicine: i) to embody the philosophy of health by supporting the body's inherent self-healing capacity; ii) to recognize the role of natural science and empirical evidence in the foundation of naturopathic medicine and their relevance within a rationalist medical philosophy; and iii) to foster enhanced understanding of naturopathic philosophy (and its consequent practice in nature cure) within the broad biomedical community.

Nature cure approaches can effectively address many of today's healthcare challenges, both chronic and acute. The practice of basic nature cure skills is fundamental to every therapeutic endeavor in naturopathic medicine, no matter what other modalities might be applied.

This book combines the empirical wisdom documented by the founders of nature cure with the accumulating experience

of an international community of naturopathic physicians who continue nature cure practices. It is this practice that clearly demonstrates the immense importance a defined philosophy of medicine contributes to implementing the successful clinical application of nature cure.

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TOPIC 1

Before Nature Cure: Exploring natural therapeutics in classical antiquity and the development of a coherent philosophy of medicine

André Saine, ND

William Durant, the great American philosopher and historian, said, “Philosophy is the quest of understanding through perspective.”¹ There are no topics more vital to humanity and deserving of understanding than health, disease, healing, and the quality and prolongation of life. Yet, confusion continues to reign over these topics, despite recent advances in biomedical and other sciences. The increasing rate of iatrogenic and chronic diseases in the Western world clearly depicts this state of confusion. It has been postulated that the main reason for this confusion is that conventional medicine has no coherent philosophy, if it has one at all. Arthur L. Caplan, professor of medical ethics at the University of Pennsylvania, observed, “It is unfortunate that the philosophy of medicine does not exist, because it can and should be contributing to the analysis of the goals that ought to be driving endeavors and making vital contributions.”² Sixty-five years earlier, the British epidemiologist, Francis Graham Crookshank, wrote, “In default of a Philosophy of Medicine, there can indeed be no true Science of Medicine ... He is the best physician in

the classical and fullest sense of the word who unites a mastery of his Art to an intimate acquaintance with the great historical doctrines and the philosophies on which they are based.”³, p. xv

“In default of a Philosophy of Medicine, there can indeed be no true Science of Medicine ... He is the best physician in the classical and fullest sense of the word who unites a mastery of his Art to an intimate acquaintance with the great historical doctrines and the philosophies on which they are based.” Francis Graham Crookshank, 1926, p. xv

Earlier (in 1810), Samuel Hahnemann, medicine’s most formidable reformer, emphasized three points in the preface to the first edition of *The Organon of the Healing Art*: i) health is a person’s most precious possession; ii) medicine is the most sacred of all human occupations; and iii) no occupation can therefore avoid a most severe examination of its fundamental principles.⁴

Constant inquiry is the way to knowledge. Clarity of mind leads to clarity of action — and understanding the philosophical, scientific, historical, sociopolitical, and cultural terrain in which medical practice has developed enables us to pursue our own practice with greater clarity. Hence, the objective of this chapter is to develop a clear understanding of the most fundamental principles of medicine, in order to clarify the development of Nature Cure as a system of medicine and to trace the continuity of

these principles throughout the development of nature cure practice.

“Medicine is an art, as well as a science. You cannot have one without the other.” Thomas Kruzel, ND. 2024

The etymology of Nature Cure

Precisely what does ‘Nature Cure’ mean? It is an expression commonly used by natural health practitioners at the turn of the 19th century and throughout most of the 20th century. It seems now to be used less commonly, except perhaps in circumstances when naturopathic students and physicians are searching for or are being reminiscent of their profession’s roots. In this context, the word ‘cure’ means ‘care, treatment or a method of treatment,’ and not ‘the recovery of health.’ Therefore, ‘nature cure’ essentially means a system of natural treatment.

In the 19th century, the term, ‘nature cure,’ meant ‘a system of natural treatment.’

As a method of treatment, the expression, ‘nature cure,’ first appeared in the English literature in the 1890s⁵ corresponding with Arnold Rikli’s influential publication, *Die Grundlehren der Naturheilkunde* (The Basic Teachings of Naturheilkunde).⁶ Therefore, the expression, ‘nature cure,’ seems to be the arbitrarily adopted translation of

Naturheilkunde.^{7,8} Yet, the expression, *Naturheilkunde*, precedes Rikli and is found in German literature as early as 1802.⁹ Incidentally, the German word, *Wasserheilkunde*, had been translated and commonly used in English as ‘water cure’ since the 1830s. The 1849 biography of J. H. Rausse, an ardent proponent of hydrotherapy, was entitled *Der Reformator der Wasserheilkunde oder Naturheilkunde* (The Reformer of Water Cure or Nature Cure [sic: Worlcat]).¹⁰ *Naturheilkunde*, in turn, derives from three German words; namely, *Natur* (meaning ‘according to Nature or natural’); *heilen* (meaning ‘to restore wholeness or healing’); and *Kunde* (meaning ‘all encompassing knowledge’). Therefore, the more accurate translation of *Naturheilkunde* would be ‘the principles and practice of natural healing.’ However, since natural healing is inseparable from natural living, a comprehensive translation should be, ‘the principles and practice of natural living and healing.’

Today, when German physicians who specialize in *Naturheilkunde* are asked to translate *Naturheilkunde* to English, they spontaneously say, “naturopathy.” *Naturheilkunde* is also translated as ‘naturopathy’ in the *German-English Technical Dictionary*.¹¹ We can conclude that nature cure, *Naturheilkunde*, naturopathy, and naturopathic medicine, all mean ‘the principles and practice of natural living and healing.’

“Within common usage of the 19th- early 20th centuries, the word ‘cure’ meant ‘care, treatment, or a method of treatment,’ and not ‘the recovery of health.’” André Saine, ND

Concepts of natural healing throughout civilizations

When the naturopathic profession was founded in the US at the close of the 19th century, the nature cure movement was composed mostly of German and American approaches to natural living and healing. These approaches included hygiene (inspired by Hufeland, Graham, Jennings, Trall, and Jackson); hydrotherapy (emerging from the teachings of Priessnitz, Rausse, Shew, Jackson, Kneipp, and Kellogg); homeopathy (developed by Hahnemann and pursued by a large and influential European and American following); physical medicine and especially manual medicine (from the teachings of Mesmer, Kellogg, Still, and Palmer)); botanical medicine (from the Native American traditions, Thomson, Rafinesque, and Beach [eclecticism]); and the European herbal traditions.

The roots of natural living and healing are as old as humanity and medicine. As the essence of medical endeavors at all times throughout humanity has been the enhancement of health, the prevention and cure of diseases, the optimization of health, and the prolongation of life, it would be difficult to find a civilization or a system of traditional medicine throughout the different eras which

doesn't mention some elements of natural living and healing.

For example, the concepts of innate healing, wholism, or health as a state of balance and harmony are found in the *Nei Ching* (2700 BC) and in Ayurveda (science of life) (1500 BC). The concepts of iatrogenic disease and disease as a multifactorial phenomenon with a fundamental cause and auxiliary cause also are found in Ayurvedic medicine. The concept of psychic causes of somatic diseases is almost universal in ancient medicine. Hygiene is omnipresent in all systems of traditional medicine. Galen (2nd century AD) wrote the *Art of Preserving Health (De sanitate tuenda)* that reflects the medical lore of several centuries. Hydrotherapy is found in Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Arabic medical traditions. Heliotherapy (the exposure to natural sunlight) was used by the Egyptians more than 5,000 years ago. Therapeutic fasting can be found in the writing of the Pythagorean (6th century BCE) and Hippocratic (5th century BCE) schools. Pythagoras learned about fasting and how to undertake a 40-day initiation fast from the Egyptians in Memphis where he studied for 20 years. The concept of *similitude* is found throughout the history of medicine, notably in the writings of Hippocrates and Paracelsus. Celsus (1st century CE) left a maxim, *Cito, tuto et jucunde* (quickly, safely, and pleasantly), which has profoundly affected medical thinking, ever since.

In most of these ancient medical traditions, there also are elements that are contrary to human nature or, to put it more mildly, elements that are less favorable to health and healing. For instance, bloodletting was used since ancient times, and was popular in Egyptian and Greek medical traditions. Mercury, in crude doses, was used in Chinese, Tibetan, Indian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman medical traditions. Thus, if we try to integrate what can be learned since ancient times, we find seven fundamental principles solidly embedded throughout the history of medicine. (Incidentally, the word ‘principles,’ derives from the Latin, principium, which means ‘beginning’ or ‘fundamental truth.’) These principles are indisputable and universal, impeccably sound, and are in fact the fundamental principles of classical medicine. ‘Classical,’ in this case, meaning ‘of the highest standards and traditionally authoritative.’¹²

The seven fundamental principles of classical medicine

The first principle applies exclusively to the physician, while the other six apply to the actual practice of medicine.

1. *Aude sapere*: physician, dare to know and become a true philosopher and scientist, but, above all, a true artist.
2. *Praeventum*: prevention is better than a cure. Therefore, the highest mission of the physician is to guide people to follow a lifestyle that is conducive to good health.

3. *Primum non nocere*: first, do no harm.
4. *Tolle causam, cessat effectus*: remove the cause and the effect will cease. There are causes of sickness and above all, physician, address them at their most remote level.
5. *Vis medicatrix naturae*: the healing power of nature. It is neither the physician nor the treatment that heals, but only the living organism. Therefore, the physician must seek to encourage this innate process by first making sure the conditions of health are met and, if necessary, by using the help of various external forces and influences of nature to enhance the recovery of health.
6. *Nunquam pars pro toto*: never the part, but always the whole. The physician considers the patient as a unique indivisible whole and, therefore, takes into consideration the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, energetic, lifestyle, hereditary, social, and environmental aspects of each individual.
7. *Cito, lenis, jucunde, toto, durable, certo, simplex et tuto curare*: The highest ideal of therapy is the rapid, gentle, pleasant, complete, and permanent restoration of health in the surest, simplest and least harmful way.

These principles are universal and can be applied to all aspects of life, especially those related to solving problems, whether they are personal or societal, material, or psychological, or in economics, politics, or science. From these seven principles, dozens of sub-principles and multiple corollaries can be deduced which may further

guide physicians in their mission in developing effective training programs for physicians. For instance, a sub-principle of *tolle causam* is *bona diagnosis, bona curatio* (good diagnosis, good cure). This implies that physicians must be well trained in diagnosis with a thorough knowledge in the examination of patients, in order to find the precise causes of disease and their effects. This further implies that physicians must have a thorough knowledge of physiology and pathology, and have the basis to make accurate diagnoses and prognoses. The study of pathology, for instance, can't be reduced to lesional changes, as is commonly found in modern textbooks of pathology, but also must include all changes from the normal state of health, including functional, emotional or mental changes, abnormal sensitivities, or particular sensations.

Although the naturopathic profession has officially adopted most of these principles, it may be easy for physicians to lose touch with them. We should ensure that naturopathic medical education remains fully concordant with these principles.

In essence, the practice of naturopathic medicine, when working with sick people, can be summarized in three basic steps: 1) a thorough examination of the patient in order to obtain a precise diagnosis and the causes of disease and their effects; therefore, the identification of the forces and influences at play; 2) removal of the ultimate causes of disease; and 3) support the organism to heal with

the adoption of conditions, forces, and influences conducive to good health, healing, and recovery. Keeping these fundamentals at the heart of practice has enabled nature cure doctors to foster a medical system that is:

- wise — it is safe and holistic; it affects the fundamental causes of disease, and uses the different forces and influences of nature to heal in a gentle manner.
- rational — it is based on theoretically sound reasoning and accurate observation by large groups of people over long periods of time.
- resourceful — it draws its body of knowledge from many traditions and eras in all the disciplines of natural living and healing. Our armamentarium is as rich and powerful as are the healing forces in nature.
- scientific — from observation of nature we ascertain principles, apply these principles, and report our results and verifications. Peer-reviewed journals already contain a wealth of this information.
- effective — above all, we guide sick people to recover their health and when our principles are appropriately applied and our armamentarium is fully employed, few are those who can't be significantly helped in their recovery of health from acute or chronic ailments. Moreover, nature cure methods have been found to be cost effective.¹³

Although the nature cure movement of the 19th century was rich in experience and knowledge, as naturopathic physicians, we should not be confined to a movement or to an era only in search of our roots. Instead, we should also

consider all the principles and practices of natural living and healing expounded by various traditions throughout the eras. Our common goal should be the continual pursuit of a coherent understanding of all these principles and practices for the welfare of humanity.

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TOPIC 2

The History of the Nature Cure Movement & Clinical Practice

Eric Blake, ND

In the latter half of 19th century, a popular social movement emerged in Europe bearing the name, The Nature Cure. Simultaneously, a similar movement (Natural Hygiene) developed in the United States, led by hydropathic physicians of the era. Both movements espoused fresh, minimally processed foods, dietetics, physical and mental hygiene, therapeutic exercise and breathing, hydrotherapy, appropriate labor, and rest. These were considered key elements for promoting health and overcoming disease, both for individuals and for society. Thus began the modern reincarnation of the Hippocratic method.

Leaders of the Nature Cure movement were astute observers of the underlying influences of lifestyle and environment upon the health and wellbeing of individuals and society.

Prominent leaders of the Nature Cure movement, including Louis Kuhne, Vincent Priessnitz, Sebastian Kneipp, Emmanuel Felke, Arnold Rikli, Adolf Just, and Russell Trall, advocated a 'return to nature.' They were not dogmatically intent upon restricting social evolution. Rather, they espoused certain principles of health and hygiene, based upon their observations of the underlying influences

lifestyle and environment had upon the health and wellbeing of individuals and society.

Although individual practices of Nature Cure differed, practitioners generally advocated a simple diet of vegetables, fruits in season, whole foods, oils and grains; liberal water consumption (according to the patient's desire); regular physical activity; breathing exercises; cultivation of spiritual faith; moderation in alcohol consumption; avoidance of tobacco; and an orderly sleeping routine. Most advocated periodically communing with nature through hiking and outdoor exposure. Dress reform focused on comfortable clothing that did not restrict normal physiological function. Almost all Nature Cure advocates were proponents of some form of hydrotherapy treatment, many advocated herbal teas, and some included manual therapies such as massage. The term, 'sun bathing,' derives from the Nature Cure use of sun and air baths.

Today, many of the empirical observations and methods of nature cure are validated by current scientific and clinical research. For example, we know the foods advocated by nature cure practitioners are nutrient rich, organic, and easily digestible by the human body. We know that regular exercise builds health, deep breathing promotes relaxation, regular sleep is vital to the body's energy economy, cultivating spiritual faith has a positive health impact, and that hydrotherapy has potent immune modulating effects. The modern exercise industry, the

international spa industry, the health food industry, and the international profession of naturopathic physicians are the contemporary equivalents, and in some cases, the modern descendants, of the 19th-century Nature Cure movement.

Early nature cure proponents promoted a naturalist philosophical orientation to health. The Nature Cure movement called for an understanding of nature's laws and how they could be applied to the care of the sick and to the prevention of illness. Where Samuel Hahnemann introduced use of the Experimental Method for drug evaluation, the Nature Cure supporters advocated the application of natural science to the care of the human body.

Yet, where did this 'nature cure' come from? Was it a spontaneous development with no antecedents? Were the ideas of nature cure unique to Europe and North America? Whatever became of nature cure? The first three questions we will address directly in the next few pages. As for the last question, we will see that when we understand nature cure, we will know it exists today in various forms, all around us.

The sociopolitical and cultural context in which nature cure developed

The history of natural healing is as old as humanity. For example, rubbing a bruised limb is a form of primitive massage; applying cold water or mud packs are forms of hydrotherapy; seeking out useful plants is herbology; and

dressing in natural garments in harmony with the seasons is harmonizing with Nature. The Egyptians developed massage, manipulation, and reflexology. Religious dietary prohibitions, such as Judaic law, are systems of dietetics. Eastern Europe developed steam baths, and the Romans also had elaborate bathing practices. The early written observations of the *Huang Ti Nei Jing Su Wen* (*Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*) and those of Hippocrates clarify the importance of sanitation and hygiene for promoting health and preventing disease. These early manifestations of the healing arts and methods, which are still practiced around the world today, are methods of natural healing or nature cure.

Anthropology teaches us that the current intellectual separation of humanity, nature, and spirituality is just that — recent. From a cross-cultural viewpoint, the common understanding is that humans are a part of nature and that nature is infused with spiritual life. Historically, illness was interpreted as a violation of this order and as punishment for transgression. It is for this reason that the earliest healer physicians also were spiritual leaders.

A complete history of the healing arts exceeds the scope of this chapter; however, a general summary is that physicians during the Dark Ages in Europe began to move away from therapeutic naturalism with its gentle therapies and high margin of safety. They moved, instead, toward strong chemical therapeutics and dangerous blood-letting that

was a misinterpretation of the work of Aulus Cornelius Celsus (ca 25 BC—ca 50). Regardless, it was in the context of several centuries of strong and questionably effective physicians’ therapeutics that the Nature Cure and Natural Hygiene movements evolved. As systems of healing, they are concerned primarily with the science of health and the ability of the body to heal when supplied with the basic requirements for health.⁵

Dress Reform is a sociocultural development reflecting the ideas that were developing about health in the late 19th century. At this time, evidence was accumulating that chlorosis, a condition similar to anemia and common among women and young girls, was caused, in part, by tightly laced corsets. Early nature cure proponents advised abandoning corsets to help address this widespread ailment.⁶ The advertisement in Figure 1 documents the gradual evolution of this fashion and social trend. Titled, ‘The Emancipation Waist,’ this is excerpted from the “Catalog of Dress Reform and Other Sanitary Under-Garments For Ladies and Children” published by George Frost and Co., Boston, Massachusetts, on June 1, 1876.

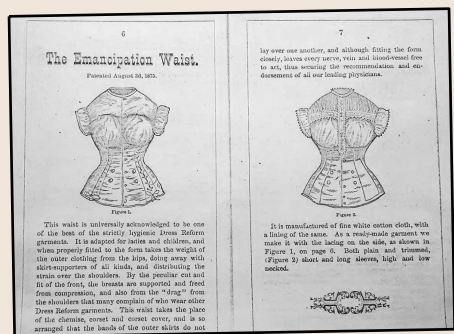


Fig. 1 ‘The Emancipation Waist.’ Excerpt from ‘Catalog of Dress Reform and Other Sanitary Under-Garments For Ladies and Children’ George Frost and Co., Boston Mass June 1, 1876.

Source: Catalog of Dress Reform and Other Sanitary Under-Garments For Ladies and Children’ George Frost and Co., Boston Mass June 1, 1876. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton MA. Copyright-free image from Picryl <https://picryl.com/media/1876-catalog-the-emancipation-waist-edited-edited-774e84>

ANM

Early Proponents of Nature Cure

Vincent Priessnitz (1799-1852) is the recognized founder of the Nature Cure renaissance in Europe. This peasant from Grafenburg in Austrian Silesia restored himself to health after a life-threatening accident involving a hay cart. Inspired by his observations of animals that recuperated on his farm by lying in cold, wet mud and ponds, he used cold, wet compresses and healed his injuries. In 1829, Priessnitz established a hydrotherapy institute. He relied almost exclusively on cold water applications in the form of cold-water packs, compresses, and various douches. Not being a physician, he was persecuted and eventually exonerated by the Austrian government. His institution became internationally known, and was visited by dignitaries, commoners, and physicians. Famous throughout Europe, visited by thousands of patients, and a teacher to many visiting doctors, the Austrian government eventually constructed a road to his small town to accommodate the travelers seeking to learn his 'cure' consisting of simple diet, fresh air activity, and various cold-water applications. In his 20 years of practice, Priessnitz treated more than 7,500 patients. In 1839, 120 doctors visited and studied with him.

Father Sebastian Kneipp (1821-1894) As a boy growing up in Bavaria, Kneipp studied fervently to become a priest and his studies brought him to the point of physical exhaustion. His weakened lungs became contaminated by the ubiquitous tuberculosis of the period. He rehabilitated

himself by cold-water applications after chance discovery of a pamphlet on the subject. (Historians generally agree the pamphlet was written by Theodor Hahn, a student of Priessnitz.) Eventually restored to health, Kneipp completed his studies and attained his desire to become a priest. While ministering to the spiritual needs of his community in Bad Worishofen (modern-day Germany), he also helped their physical bodies via the natural methods he had acquired over the years. Eventually, Kneipp's fame spread internationally and thousands traveled from all parts of the world to be treated by him, including Archduke Joseph and his son, Ferdinand. Kneipp used a simple diet, fresh air exercise, extensive methods of hydrotherapy, rest, and internal herbal treatment. He wrote several books describing his treatments, such as *Wash and Be Healed* and *My Water Cure*, which have been translated into several languages. His influence is enormous, his methods still studied and practiced today, and many of his students and patients, such as Alex Ledoux, Benjamin Lust, Henry Lindlahr, and Padre Tadeo, shaped the early naturopathic profession.

Emmanuel Felke (1856-1926), a German Protestant pastor, studied the works of other 19th-century nature doctors and crafted his own system. Principally, he used mud packs, cold sitz baths, simple diet, and exercise. Air, water, light, and loam (mud) were the curative agents in his system. Interestingly, he studied and eventually practiced iridology, gaining considerable fame for the accuracy of his

diagnoses. Based upon his iris findings, he prescribed homeopathic medicines as complexes or combinations. He was a pioneer in both iris diagnosis and homeopathic complexes, and many of his combination formulae are still in use.

Arnold Rikli (1823-1906) popularized light and air baths (which are now known as sunbathing) and established the first nature cure institution.⁷ Adolf Just advocated fresh air exposure and hiking. Louis Kuhne first articulated the naturopathic understanding of the unifying factors of health and disease. Disease, according to Kuhne, cannot occur without the presence of foreign matter in the system and the foreign matter cannot accumulate without first a weakening of the organism. His first book, *Neo Naturopathy*, is regarded as the foundation of naturopathic pathology.

These 18th- and 19th-century nature doctors reshaped European medicine. They established large patient populations, and taught students and doctors to carry on their work. As these doctors, their students and their patients traveled, they carried the ideas of the Nature Cure to an international audience. These ideas then spread to North America, South America, South Africa, England, and India.

Stanley Lief, Boris Chaitow, and James C. Thomson became champions of the Nature Cure in South Africa and England. **Henry Lahn, Benedict Lust, Henry Lindlahr, Joe**

Shelby Riley, Frederick Collins, Hugo Wendel and countless others spread the natural methods of healing throughout North America. In India, the Nature Cure ideas correlated with Ayurvedic principles of health. **Mohatma Gandhi** wrote a short text, *Nature Cure*, which compares the two systems of Ayurveda and Nature Cure. At the turn of the 20th century, **Padre Tadeo**, a priest and student of Father Kneipp, traveled to Argentina, where he cured a young medical student, **Manuel Lazeata Acharan**, of syphilis. Acharan left medical school to become a natural healer. His textbook of Nature Cure theory and practice, *Medicina Natural al Alcance de Todos (Natural Medicine in the Reach of All)*, is still in print today and has influenced generations of clinicians. His theory of health and disease is based upon restoring thermic equilibrium.

Gandhi and nature cure: a vehicle to self-reliance and autonomy

Mahatma Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) (1869-1948) is widely recognized as the global proponent of nonviolent civil disobedience that helped liberate India from British colonial rule in 1947.^{8, 9} He also was a strong supporter of Indian naturopathy and was known to follow nature cure practices (including fasting and hydrotherapy). For 3 months in 1845, he was an inpatient at the Nature Cure Clinic and Sanatorium in Pune.¹⁰ He once considered attending medical school, and was influenced by Adolf Just's *Return to Nature*⁹ and Louis Kuhne's *New Science of Healing*¹¹ During his confinement at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune (1942-1944), Gandhi authored his own book, *Key to Health*.

Gandhi considered health to be a byproduct of human activities (e.g., food, exercise, housing, education, hygiene, employment, etc);⁹ believed the practice of medicine should include hygiene, nutrition, and psychology; and emphasized the role of doctors as teachers, not

solely as dispensers of medications. To extend nature cure medical services to the rural poor, Gandhi founded a nature cure hospital in the small village of Uruli Kanchan, near Pune.⁹

On November 18, 1945, shortly before his untimely assassination in 1948, Gandhi was named 'lifetime chairman' of the All India Nature Cure Foundation trust, founded by his nature cure physician, Dr. Dinshaw K. Mehta,¹² and now known as The National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN). In October 2019, to mark the 150th anniversary of Gandhi's birth, India's Ministry of AYUSH (Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy),¹ declared November 18th as Naturopathy Day.

Given the focus on the philosophy and practice of nature cure, including its therapies and modalities, it's easy to lose sight of an underlying, but essential repercussion of nature cure practice: the sense of self-agency and autonomy it can inspire in patients. With education and support from nature cure providers, those treated soon realize a level of autonomy and control over their own health that historically has been obscured in Western medical practices. Yet, this self-reliance was considered a key benefit of nature cure by Gandhi not only practiced -- but also understood -- the fundamental philosophy behind nature cure. For him, nature cure was imperative to improving the health and welfare of his countrymen, and an avenue to decreasing the nation's dependence on Western influences, including medicine: "The man who accepts nature cure never begs. Self-help enhances self-respect. He takes steps to cure himself by eliminating poisons from the system and takes precautions against falling ill in the future"⁹ ANM

¹ The Ministry of AYUSH is a government organization formed in 2014 to develop and support education, research, and dissemination of indigenous alternative medicine systems in India.

The evolution from nature cure to naturopathy

In 1902, various natural health organizations in New York City — such as the Kneipp societies, vegetarian clubs, massage therapists, hydropaths, and electrotherapists — formed a congress to determine a suitable name that would unify the evolving work of the broadening natural health movement. From this congress, the new title, ‘naturopath’ was used to generally describe practitioners of natural health. The word, ‘naturopathy,’ was coined to describe the philosophical and theoretical orientation of naturopaths. The next stage of evolution for the field was to move beyond the limited applications of Nature Cure into the larger, more inclusive realm of all forms of natural healing within the unified field of naturopathy.¹³ The description of the various modalities and methods united by this title is worth reviewing. In 1901, the congress decided that all methods of drugless healing should be practiced, employing the following methods (henceforth considered to be the province of the naturopath):¹⁴

- Naturotherapy: naturopathy, natural therapeutics, hydrotherapy, dietetics, and the methods of Kneipp, Bilz, Kuhne, and Just.
- Manipulative therapy: massotherapy, massage, bonesetting, mechanotherapy, osteopathy, chiropractic, respirotherapy, medical gymnastics, physical culture (exercise).
- Light and air treatment: electrotherapy, ray therapy, heliotherapy, chromotherapy (color therapy),

Nature Cure: A condensed history

Many individuals and forms of practice have influenced the evolution of what is now called nature cure. As shown in the condensed timeline below, nature cure practice can be traced from classical antiquity to current medical practice.¹

Classical Antiquity	Mid-19th ct Germany	Mid-19th ct North America	Early 20th ct	Mid-20th ct
Hippocrates' Cos school's concepts of <i>vis medicatrix naturae</i> & <i>tolle totum</i>	Priessnitz and Kneipp, use water therapies, healing foods and plants, outdoor activity in nature, physical and mental rest, air and sun bathing to renew patients' health	213+ health retreats & sanatoria offering natural therapies supervised by health reformers from various medical sects, including 'regulars,' hydropaths, & homeopaths	Nature cure is included in the early naturopathic profession as it emerged in the early 1900s.	Profession consolidates by establishing stronger professional bodies and educational curricula.

While credit is given to the Greek physician, Hippocrates, for elucidating the underlying principles of natural therapeutics,, these principles were first developed at the beginning of the 19th century by Samuel Thomson (1769-1843) and matured in the later works of practitioners of physiomedicalism, a practice based on vitalistic principles.² According to one of its foremost practitioners, J. M. Thurston (1900), physiomedicalism is, "...a medical philosophy founded on the theorem of a vital force or energy, inherent in living matter of tissue units, whose aggregate expression in health and disease is the functional activities of the organism; and whose inherent tendency is integrative and constructive"^{3,4} According to Priest, "the hygienic philosophy embraced by the term, naturopathy can be said to have commenced with Samuel Thomson before 1800, rather than the later German pioneers of nature cure."² RNT

phonotherapy (sound therapy), phototherapy.

- Nature Medica: herbal therapy, biotherapy, biochemic tissue salts (Scheussler salts), homeopathy, pneumatotherapy (cupping).
- Metaphysical: psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, mental therapy, suggestive therapy, hypnotic therapy, mesmeric therapy, magnetic therapy, New Thought, Higher Thought.
- Spiritual: occult therapy (unknown methods, modern equivalents would include Reiki, Polarity therapy, etc.), Divine healing.¹⁴

Nature Cure and Nursing:

Did nature cure influence Florence Nightingale?

It is likely that the Nature Cure movement influenced Nightingale's practice and ideas. In 1851, she gained her first nursing experience in Kaiserwerth, Germany, and many of her writings indicate an awareness of nature cure principles, such as nursing the whole person; attention to spiritual needs; and use of fresh air, sunlight, rest, and diet.

Nightingale also wrote about the detoxifying role of the skin in disease processes, and is considered by some to have promoted concepts of health and healing that were consistent with nature cure ideas.¹⁵ ANM

Thus, the naturopathic profession was born at the congress in New York City and a new profession was organized to investigate, develop, utilize, and advocate for the time-tested principles and practices of natural health and healing. Today, elements of the early naturopathic movement and its various manifestations (massage,

dietetics, vegetarianism, health food stores, exercise, movement therapies, herbology, hiking, swimming, hydrotherapy, saunas, psychotherapy), including elements of the Nature Cure — have been subsumed into the larger popular consciousness and are nearly ubiquitous.

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