

## **Naturopathic Doctors Thriving in Maine, 20 Years After OK From Lawmakers**

*The Maine Legislature passed a law in 1996 to license Naturopathic Doctors. There are now more than 30 NDs practicing in the state, including newcomers from Oregon, Hawaii, and Australia.*

**PORTLAND, Maine**, Aug. 29, 2016 — When Naturopathic Doctor Devra Krassner moved to Maine in the early 1990s, the profession was not yet regulated by the state, and there were only a handful of NDs practicing in northern New England.

Back then, holistic treatments such as acupuncture, herbal remedies, and meditation were largely viewed as curious West Coast trends.

“Most Naturopathic Doctors were practicing in the Northwest because that is where the two U.S. schools were at the time,” Krassner recalled. “I was from the East Coast and felt strongly that the public should have access to naturopathic medicine here.”

In 1996, thanks to the work of Krassner and a small group of trailblazers and supporters, the Maine Legislature passed a law allowing NDs to be licensed here.

Twenty years later, NDs in Maine are celebrating the milestone and the rising interest in complementary and alternative medicine. There are now more than 30 licensed Naturopathic Doctors practicing in Maine, a solid figure for a rural state of only 1.3 million people. The number has been growing in recent years, as NDs have moved here from [Oregon](#), [Hawaii](#), [Australia](#), and elsewhere.

“We’re fortunate to live and work in a state that recognizes the value of Naturopathic Doctors, and our roles in the broader healthcare community,” said Dr. Corrie Marinaro, ND, president of the Maine Association of Naturopathic Doctors.

A Colby College and Bastyr University graduate, Marinaro opened [New England Naturopathic Health](#) in 2012 in a single room on Main Street in Waterville. Since then she has hired two employees, expanded into five

rooms, and is doubling that space this year to accommodate demand for her services.

“I think naturopathic medicine appeals to people in Maine because of some core values,” she said. “Mainers are self-determined. They are free thinking, they value local relationships, and they are open to ideas that are outside the mainstream.”

While they come from diverse backgrounds, [NDs in Maine share a common approach](#): They seek to find and treat the underlying causes of illness, rather than simply managing symptoms. The range of services includes physical exams, laboratory and imaging studies, botanical medicine, homeopathy, nutrition counseling, vitamin and supplement therapy, assessments for genetic risk factors, microbiome balancing, and more. Some health insurance companies have been slow to comply with the federal Affordable Care Act, which requires them to cover services provided by NDs, but they are coming around, Marinaro said.

To be licensed in Maine, NDs must be graduates of doctoral-level naturopathic medical schools accredited by the U.S. Department of Education. On the national level, 17 states license NDs, and advocates are seeking licensure in Massachusetts and several other states. The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians announced earlier this year that it will push for licensure in all states by 2025.

Maine’s naturopaths continue to build relationships with local MDs and DOs, as healthcare in the U.S. moves toward Integrative Medicine. This model embraces the benefits of conventional, complementary, and alternative treatments. It encourages different providers to collaborate for the best interest of patients.

Krassner, who felt isolated 20 years ago, now works in an [integrative medical practice](#) with three MDs, a DO, nurse practitioner, nutrition counselor, social worker, psychologist, and others.

“Naturopathic doctors are much more accepted by everyone in general, although there are always some people and doctors that are more open,” Krassner said. “We are really the only primary care doctors for whom natural therapies are actually our standard of practice.”