HB 15-1075, Naturopathic Doctors Treatment of Children Under Two

Position: SUPPORT

Summary: The bill removes the prohibition for a registered naturopathic doctor (ND) to treat a child under the age of two. It sets forth statutory requirements on the ND for a standard of care for this very vulnerable population.

Background: The Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (CO AAP) has worked over the years to help align the wishes of our patients and the community with the best available evidence-based pediatric practices. At times, there is a lack of evidence, and the protection of our vulnerable population from harm becomes a priority.

The care of young infants (ages 0 to 2 years) poses particular challenges. The early identification of developmental disorders, genetic conditions, and behavioral problems is essential to promoting and supporting lifelong health in kids. Provision of necessary and timely immunizations protects the child from serious illness, and provides some protection to the community as well. Young infants are particularly vulnerable to rapid deteriorations in health, and require prompt access to evaluation and care in a medical home.

Mindful of these concerns, the CO AAP has met over the years with representatives from the Colorado Association of Naturopathic Doctors to find common ground and support connections between NDs and pediatricians to attempt to serve our patients’ best interests. Families who seek care with NDs often are outside of the traditional healthcare community and have no relationship with licensed healthcare providers such as Pediatricians, Family Doctors, or Advanced Practice Nurses. However, the ND community seeks such connections and is interested in helping support the medical home model as adjunct providers with a relationship with traditional licensed primary healthcare providers (PCPs). Of note, the ND community is relatively small in Colorado at this point, and represents practitioners of naturopathy who have attended a longer curriculum than unlicensed practitioners (“lay naturopaths”) and have advanced degrees (doctorate level) in naturopathy (ND).

Recently the Naturopathic Doctors have agreed to the following stipulations if they care for young infants from ages 0 to 2:

1) Referral to a physician or advanced practice nurse to provide a medical home, with ongoing communication and relationship with the licensed PCP (MD, DO, or APRN)
2). Endorsement of, and recommendation of the ACIP immunization schedule.

3). Maintenance of annual continuing education in pediatric healthcare issues, with attention to stabilization and identification of emergency conditions in infants.

The CO AAP supports these provisions and believes they make sense in our state. We hope that through building these connections we can provide for our families who seek alternative treatments in a safe and collaborative way.

Submitted January 27, 2015          Contact: Ruth Aponte, 303-907-1980