



AANMC Statement of Facts and Values Pertinent to COVID-19

The purpose of this statement is to provide members of the naturopathic medical education community guidance regarding COVID-19 public health recommendations and communications. COVID-19 is a novel disease that has rapidly spread around the world and altered the very fabric of our daily lives. In an effort to understand and manage this pandemic, many are trying to interpret and adapt to the ever-changing informational landscape. As is the case with emerging diseases, knowledge is currently incomplete and developing.

Unfortunately, misinformation and disinformation regarding COVID-19 are rapidly spreading which impair the ability of the medical community to address this public health crisis.

AANMC and its member institutions are committed to be a part of the solution to this public health crisis.

We affirm the following:

- Millions affected: COVID-19 is a public health emergency. In a span of months, millions have been infected and over one million people have died around the world.
- Shared responsibility: All members of society share responsibility in limiting the spread of this disease. Adhering to public health measures serves to protect each individual and members of at-risk populations.
- Vulnerable populations: Specific demographics are now known to be especially vulnerable to this disease, and have been disproportionately affected by it, notably: the elderly; people with comorbidities; front-line healthcare providers and essential workers; and those suffering from social and healthcare inequities. This healthcare crisis has exacerbated existing fractures in our healthcare delivery models and drawn increased attention to the impacts of systemic racism and conscious and unconscious bias on our collective health. Young patients and those with no pre-existing risk factors are also succumbing to this virus. Additionally, emerging evidence now indicates that even mild infections may result in longer debilitating illnesses.
- Limited treatment options: Currently, there is no proven or effective prevention or treatment for this novel coronavirus, and treatments are still limited in their application/efficacy. Vaccines are still in development.
- Challenges to controlling the disease:
 - a. this infection is often spread by people before they become symptomatic;
 - b. one person can infect many others, leading to exponential growth in the number of infected people;

- c. there are concerns and examples where healthcare infrastructure and resources can be overwhelmed as a result of cases not being contained.
- Essential prevention: Public health safety measures are vital to slow the spread of the disease. Key behaviors to adopt are physical distancing, mask-wearing, personal hygiene and handwashing, and self-isolating after possible exposure to the virus or when experiencing symptoms associated with the infection. Surface contamination does not appear to be a major vector for COVID-19, however since the data are incomplete and other contagious diseases are known to spread in this manner, proper hygiene and disinfection of frequently touched public surfaces such as door handles and elevator buttons is recommended.
 - Responsible communications: Any suggestion that lifestyle and diet alone can prevent or greatly mitigate one's risk of COVID-19 infection or the severity of disease is not supported by current evidence, is not responsible, and may inadvertently blame victims for factors beyond their control.
 - Professional responsibilities: Public trust in public health measures is essential to the containment of this disease. As healthcare providers and educators, naturopathic doctors and students must use their patient interactions, platforms, and public standing to share accurate information based on the preponderance of evidence that supports and protects public health.

Knowledge is continually evolving: We, as current and future health care providers, must welcome new discoveries, adapt our thinking as new information emerges, and help our patients and the public understand and follow revised public health recommendations. This statement may also require revision as the situation develops. The above facts and values align with naturopathic principles and the naturopathic oath: to first do no harm, to teach by words and example to prevent disease, and to do this in the service of humanity.

*Adapted with permission from the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine

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