



Dr Neil McKinney, ND

Vital Victoria Naturopathic Clinic

By Philip Rouchotas MSc, ND
Photography by Keri Coles

Dr Neil McKinney has entrenched himself as a leading authority in integrative cancer treatment. With over 25 years of clinical practice this 1985 graduate of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine retraces training from far earlier in his career as the starting point for his interest in the field. Working as a lab instructor in microbiology at the University of Victoria trained Dr. McKinney to work with cell and tissue culture. He went on to apply this skillset on behalf of the BC Cancer Research Foundation in which his team was requested to generate materials for preclinical cancer research. The team was growing animal and human cell lines, and was creating artificial tissue. An interest to pursue medicine lead to tours of several alternative cancer clinics across North and Central America, culminating in his enrollment at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine.

Neil focused his naturopathic training on expanding his knowledge of cancer. His first patient in private practice was a terminal cancer patient. Neil has coined several interesting expressions to describe the ultimate goals of his practice; first he relates cancers of all types to weeds- resilient to a magnitude that sees them cracking concrete to continue to grow. He highlights that true eradication of an established cancer is extremely difficult to achieve. Instead, he focuses care on reducing cancer burden and teaching patients to become comfortable with living with their cancer. Secondly, he has had tremendous success with “prolonging expiry dates”; helping patients survive, with a greater than expected quality of life, for far longer than the prognosis initially provided by their oncologist. His first patient in private practice survived six months past her expected expiry date.



Dr McKinney recognizes the importance of the immense task of assimilating and disseminating the knowledge base that is naturopathic medicine, and has been among the most active doctors in the country in moving the profession forward. He has been a professor to naturopathic students throughout his career, still delivering courses to this day at the Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine in New Westminster, BC. He currently teaches naturopathic oncology and naturopathic clinical arts and sciences. Neil has also authored a book that serves as an indispensable tool for any ND seeing cancer patients in practice; *Naturopathic Oncology - An Encyclopedia guide for patients and physicians*, the third practice guide he has authored to date. The book delivers decades of literature-based research and pearls of wisdom gathered over 25 years of practice.

Neil has been extremely active in solidifying the profession in his home province of British Columbia. Three pioneering ND's; Dr McKinney, the late Dr Don Sabourin, and Dr Kerry McGuiness founded the British Columbia Naturopathic Association in the early 1990's. The recent well-publicized successes of the BCNA and the naturopathic profession as a whole regarding the securing of broad scope of practice privileges are invariably indebted to the pioneering efforts of these visionary ND's.

Neil also deserves tremendous praise for his role in the creation of the Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine. The West Coast College of Massage Therapy, an institution Neil had direct ties

with for several decades, attempted to incorporate a naturopathic curriculum into its program. This program failed, yet had dozens of students enrolled at various stages of completion. Due to Neil's involvement with the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME), he was able to provide a vital link between the newly formed Boucher Institute and the CNME to work towards creating a program that subsequently allowed Boucher graduates the opportunity to participate in NPLEX examinations. Students enrolled in the naturopathy program at the West Coast College of Massage Therapy were transitioned to and became the first students of Boucher.





Dr McKinney's practice has evolved considerably over time. In addition to Dr McKinney, the team of Vital Victoria Naturopathic Clinic includes his wife Lynda, Reiki Master and teacher, and serves as office manager. Melissa St John- Geary is a holistic health practitioner who also supports the team as a clinic assistant. Neil adopts a truly eclectic system of practice, calling upon all of the modalities of naturopathic medicine. Any one patient is likely to receive guidance on clinical nutrition including diet modification and functional food/ nutraceutical/ essential nutrient prescriptions, botanical medicines which include western herbal medicines and a heavy reliance on TCM herbal patents, homeopathic remedies prescribed as single remedies typically at low potency for acute, specific indications, and counseling on mind- body techniques to help guide the healing process.

There is no IV lounge in the facility, yet Neil remains a strong supporter of IV vitamin C therapy and Meyer's cocktails for patients with cancer. These are services he frequently refers out for, but is actively seeking an associate to once again bring these services in-house. Included in the comprehensive eclectic approach described above, Neil considers local subcutaneous injections of mistletoe lectin (Helixor, Iscador) to be a core therapy. Neil also frequently utilizes herbal formulas of Dr Eric Yarnell, ND, and oral artemesia (for prostate, colorectal, breast and lung cancers). He describes frequent use of a select list of pharmaceutical agents including dexamethasone, proton pump inhibitors, and low dose naltrexone.

Dr McKinney has also pioneered a strategy in cancer management he has termed "mitochondrial rescue". In brief, mitochondrial failure causes a cell to lose its ability to generate an apoptotic process. The medication dichloroacetate (DCA) has achieved amazing success in cancer treatment through its ability to resuscitate mitochondrial function, but unfortunately induces severe adverse reactions in many patients. Dr McKinney's mitochondrial rescue protocol is a selection of natural health product agents demonstrated to exhibit similar mechanisms of action as DCA yet devoid of the extreme adverse reactions. This issue of IHP includes an excellent review of the basis for, and formulation of, this important treatment for individuals with cancer.

Dr McKinney has done an excellent job of integrating with local oncologists in his surrounding community. He rarely runs laboratory tests as a result of his incredibly successful integration; oncologists serving his patient base are pleased to forward all standard testing, and perform additional tests if requested. The clinic also enjoys a steady stream of referrals from local oncologists, and boasts having had oncologists as patients of the facility.

IHP is grateful to the Vital Victoria Naturopathic Clinic team for their willingness to allow us to showcase their facility to you. Dr McKinney has been setting the naturopathic standard of care for management of patients with cancer for decades, continually striving to improve and perfect the approaches he adopts in practice. His generosity and passion for moving the profession forward has seen him expertly assimilate the evidence relating to these techniques, and deliver them to students and practitioners of the profession every opportunity he gets. *Naturopathic Oncology - An Encyclopedia guide for patients and physicians* is more than the life's work of an incredibly talented physician; it is an indispensable tool for clinical practice of any integrative healthcare provider wishing the privilege of working with patients with cancer. •