

The Certified Clinical Nutritionist As A Naturopathic Practitioner

In the words of Ronald M. Deutsch, author of the book "Realities of Nutrition", "One might say that the study of nutrition unravels the mystery of how food becomes you. In other words, we grow, think, feel, walk, breath, heal our wounds, reproduce ourselves -- perform virtually every act of living -- by making life chemicals. Certain raw materials are required in order to manufacture these life chemicals. These materials are called nutrients".

The idea that nutrition is a major factor in healing and can be used medicinally to restore ones health is not widely accepted within mainstream medicine. However, clinical nutrition, or the use of diet as therapy, serves as the foundation of naturopathic medicine. The most important factor in natural medicine is to provide the optimal environment for an individual in order to prevent the onset of disease. The difference in preventive medicine and natural medicine is that: preventive medicine is typically used to signify early detection of existing disease, for example, pap-smears, and monthly breast self-exams to detect cervical and breast cancer respectively. The allopathic method of treatment relies on the detection of disease followed by therapy that might include toxic and invasive methods such as drugs, surgery or radiation. In contrast however, natural medicine emphasizes primary prevention before the occurrence of the disease and use of relatively non-toxic agents, which support physiological function.

Throughout my career as a clinical nutritionist I find that many people have a common misconception about the vital differences between a Certified Clinical Nutritionist, (CCN), and a dietician. A dietician is a person trained in nutrition, food science and diet planning. (Glossary, Chapter 1, Understanding Normal and Clinical Nutrition 5th edition, Whitney, Cataldo, Rolfes, 1998, pg. 30). They generally assess nutrition status and requirements and give guidance on diet plans based on the USDA Dietary Pyramid and exchange lists. The dietitian may serve as liaison between client and foodservice departments of hospitals, schools, and other public or private institutions. The dietitian generally does not give advice on dietary supplements, herbs, homeopathic remedies or other natural substances that may be used to assist the individual in maintaining their health or supporting their healing process.

The Certified Clinical Nutritionist (CCN), while recognizing biochemical individuality assesses a person's nutritional needs to achieve optimal physiological function. The use of whole foods and nutritional supplements in the maintenance of health, as well as in the assistance of the body to protect against and heal itself of disease is gaining more and more support from an increasing body of scientific knowledge. Many common conditions can be ministered effectively by dietary measures. Some of these diseases include acne, arthritis,

asthma, arteriosclerosis, depression, diabetes (type II), eczema, gout, hormone imbalances, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, premenstrual syndrome, and ulcerative colitis, just to name a few.

A Certified Clinical Nutritionist may also be considered a practitioner of holistic medicine because the clinical nutritionist views the patient as a whole person, with interdependent physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cultural aspects. Eligibility requirements to be certified as a CCN are as follows: a minimum Bachelors Degree in Science and Nutrition from one of the accredited bodies of The Council on Post Secondary Education. A minimum 19 science course credits and 14 human nutrition course credits, with 900 hours clinical nutrition internship. As well as, a postgraduate course designed specifically for clinical nutrition. Completion of the International and American Association of Clinical Nutrition, I.A.A.C.N. Certification Exam and 20 hours of continuing education annually.

When considering a course of study for the clinical nutritionist from the natural medicine perspective, along with the traditional basic sciences, there are many valuable fields of study that might be included in a nutritionist's training. Oriental and Ayurvedic medicine brings a very important contribution to understanding health in relationship to balance. Western culture has a tendency to focus on the scientific and mechanical aspects of disease and health, rather than understanding the subtle characteristics of the human body and our intimate relationship with the world around us.

Homeopathy is another avenue the nutritionist may use. Here is where we may understand that there is more to the nature of the human being than just the dense physical characteristics. Herbal medicine (both eastern and western) is another course that should be included in the nutritionist's training. Herbs are the root of medicine and a good working knowledge of the healing qualities of herbs and spices is invaluable.

In your first consultation with me, I will ask you questions concerning your dietary habits and lifestyle, basic symptoms of imbalance and what you desire to accomplish with your nutritional program. At that time, I will evaluate what tests should be taken and you will receive the appropriate laboratory requisition forms or test kits. Laboratory tests may include: blood, urine, saliva, stool and hair analyses. These evaluation tools provide me with a biochemical assessment to design an educational nutrition program specifically for you. This assessment also provides the bases for referral to a licensed physician, or other health care professionals if needed.

When all test data has been completed the results are automatically sent to my clinic, Center for Natural Health, to be processed. My assistants will call you back into the office where I will explain to you the findings of your evaluation and

give you your *Personalized Health Profile*. In many cases your nutritional program will include a detoxification program, dietary education and lifestyle coaching, nutritional supplementation, and a wellness strategy that will help to bring your body back into balance.

As we begin a new century this culture is discovering that naturopathic medicine is a viable alternative to mainstream medicine. The further we examine the scientific validity of nutrition as an integral and fundamental part of the healing process, the more we will influence the way nutritional science looks at food.

“The doctor of the future will give no medicine but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, in proper diet, and in the cause and prevention of disease.”

Thomas A. Edison.