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### **Naturopathy; History and Progress Made in the Ghanaian Jurisdiction**

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#### **Abstract**

We examine the history and development of Naturopathic practice in Ghana. We adopted a two-stage qualitative research design, which includes a semi-structured key informant interview accompanied by a document search with the primary stakeholder who is the President of the Ghana Alternative Medicine Practitioners (GAMPA) association at the Ministry of Health who was identified through a process of the Key Informant Technique. Information collected from the key informant was triangulated with documentation under his purview in the archives from his office and other literature searches. A narrative analysis was then carried out. Early and the majority of current Naturopaths received their education through a correspondence system of education. The first Naturopathic Medical School which had developed the first-ever higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelors in Technology Naturopathy under the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings (CTVET) is yet to receive program accreditation. Also, the lack of standardized education in Ghana has averted the development of the industry to enable the achievement of the full potential of the Ghanaian healthcare system. **Conclusion:** Naturopathy has gained huge momentum in Ghana. Our result demonstrates the history of proceedings that occurred in the Naturopathic profession space in Ghana from the 1960s to the modern era.

**Keywords:** naturopathic medicine, history, founders, Ghana, healthcare, Nyarkotey

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## INTRODUCTION

The Traditional and Alternative Medicine Draft Bill (2014) defines alternative medicine as an adopted system of medical practices that fall outside the mainstream and traditional medicine. The draft bill identified Naturopathy, Chiropractic, Acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Nutrition, Yoga, Osteopathy, Bio-regulatory Medicine, Holistic Medicine, and Ayurveda as the main alternative medical systems of practice in Ghana. This definition, therefore, means traditional medicine is not an alternative medicine modality in Ghana.

This definition also means that, in Ghana, medical practice encapsulates Mainstream or allopathy, Traditional Medicine, and Alternative Medicine. Mainstream and Traditional Medicine are backed by law. Alternative Medicine has recently been given recognition as a result of Ministerial directives ([www.graphic.com.gh](http://www.graphic.com.gh), nd).

For this research, we used the term 'CAM' (Ng et al. 2016) to collectively describe complementary and alternative medicine. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) has been identified as a group of diverse medical and healthcare systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine' (National Library of Medicine, 2010). This definition further supports the case in the Traditional and Alternative Medicine draft bill (2014).

Ghanaians have developed an appetite for CAM (Obu & Aggrey-Bluwey, 2021). This notwithstanding, one study (Fischer et al. 2014) agrees that CAM has a role to play in the management of chronic diseases. This assertion was recently supported by (Obu & Aggrey-Bluwey, 2021) which focused on reasons for this shift towards CAM, such as increasing disappointment of patients in mainstream medical practice. This notwithstanding, (Obu, R.N, 2020) is of the view that medicine is not about competition and therefore mainstream and CAM Practitioners can coexist.

Ghana stands the chance to increase its Gross Domestic Product if government pays attention to CAM. The advent of COVID-19 has increased the market share of CAM (Obu, R.N, 2020). Another study in South Africa projected that turnover from the use of CAM products reached R1.29 billion (Caldis et al.. 2001). In 2014 it was projected to be R8 billion (Medical Chronicle, 2014; Traditional and National Health Alliance, 2014). To the best of the authors' knowledge, there is currently no comprehensive indebt study on the historical evolution of Naturopathy in Ghana. Knowledge of the history of Naturopathy is important to chart a way forward for the development of the field of study globally. This paper, thus, examines Naturopathy; History and Progress Made in the Ghanaian Jurisdiction.

## METHODOLOGY

We adopted a qualitative design for this study to get information on the Naturopathic history journey in Ghana. The research design was divided into two stages.

The first stage was the interview with the key informant who is the President of the Ghana Alternative Medicine Practitioners Association (GAMPA) and also acts as the registration committee chairman at the Traditional Medicine Practice Council, Ministry of Health. We obtained permission from him to disclose his identity for this paper. He was chosen because he is the key most important person in the CAM industry with vast information. He saw the development of CAM in the 1960s when he arrived from Spain as a Chiropractor. Most of his colleagues are late now.

The second stage is where we verified the information, he provided with documents he showed to us to support his assertions, through the process of triangulation. A narrative analysis was then carried out, and results were presented.

#### *Stage one*

Being the acting President of the Ghana Alternative Medicine Practitioners Association (GAMPA) and the chairman of the registration committee of the Traditional Medicine Practice Council, Ministry of Health. We obtained permission from him to access some documents at his disposal which contained names of early CAM proponents and documents to justify his case. Available Documents were accessed from 1960 to date. Unfortunately, documents of practitioners' status on the register of the Traditional Medicine Practice Council were not in his position at the time of the research. We intended to access records of registration. We understand that there could be some *lacunae* as he is the key informant that had information on CAM.

#### *Stage Two*

Our Inclusion benchmarks for the interview were those CAM practitioners who played an integral role in the profession from 1960 to the modern era of 2020. Our exclusion criteria were those CAM practitioners for who there was evidence of exhibiting unprofessional behaviors when they entered into the system using fraudulent means. The interview was conducted electronically via a telephone conversation on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 lasting about one hour.

The purpose of the research was explained to him; to which he was more than happy to respond to our questions. We, therefore, transcribed precisely the key informant responses to our questions, thematically coded them based on the interview questions, and analyzed them manually (Braun & Clark, 2006).

## **RESULTS**

Our result is based on two areas:

- *Part 1:* Document Search –minutes of meetings of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ghana Alternative Medicine Practitioners Association (GAMPA) formed in 1997 as the governing body of CAM Practitioners.
- *Part 2:* Interviews – primary history and advocacy

*Document assessment*

We found that members of early Naturopathic pioneers received correspondence training. Others were trained through the apprenticeship system. Course materials were sent to the students in Ghana for self-teaching, exams are taken, and resubmitted to the educational schools. Dr. Afram had a scholarship opportunity from Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to travel to Britain to receive formal education in Naturopathy.

The Indian Board of Alternative Medicine (IBAM), Kolkata, India, the school was the predominating school practitioners received education in CAM, especially homeopathy, Naturopathy, and, nutrition. Many practitioners who received education through IBAM, India, had many issues with regulatory institutions and some academicians. They downplayed the credibility of the institution and called them quacks ([respectfulinsolence.com](http://respectfulinsolence.com), 2018).

Dr. Nyarkotey had to pursue another Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Naturopathy and Healthcare Science from the Universidad Empresarial de Costa Rica, which is also accredited in Ghana as a foreign institution by the National Accreditation Board. Due to the many controversies, Nyarkotey had to go to the law school to position himself in defending the industry.

In Homeopathy, the formalized education was started in 2004 by Homeopathy Without Borders. They recruit and provide education and certification. In 2010 saw some institutions such as Endpoint Homeopathic School, Gewah Homeopathic School, and C4C Homeopathic Medical College entered the homeopathic space to provide formalized education. Some could not survive.

Formalized Modern Naturopathy education was engineered in 2016 by Dr. Nyarkotey College of Holistic Medicine as it then was. The college then was recruiting students for the Da Vinci College of Holistic Medicine programs in Larnaca City, Cyprus. The College in 2018 became a fledged local provider of formal standardized Naturopathic education. The college is now Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology(NUCHMT) and has developed Diploma, Professional Diploma, Higher National Diploma(HND), and Bachelor of Technology programs in Naturopathic and Holistic Medicine. The college is the pioneer of modern Naturopathy in Ghana.

We also found that the Chiropractors were mostly expatriates who received sound chiropractic education. There is evidence of the existence of the Chiropractic Medical Schools they attended([allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com), 2001; [dynamicchiropractic.com](http://dynamicchiropractic.com), nd; Life University, nd). Three of them; Marcus Mann, James Bush Jr, and Bryan Cox attended Life University. These are highly qualified Professionals with Doctor of Chiropractic degrees. Dr. Albert Arthur was the first Chiropractor to start the activism in 1996 and received his training in Spain.

Out of the six key founding members we found as fathers; three were Ghanaians. The likes of Dr. James Bush, Dr. Marcus Mann, and Dr. Bryan Leon Cox were Americans. The late Dr. Olu akinshemoyin was born in Ghana to Nigerian Parents. Ghana has no formal educational program in Chiropractic as of now.

#### *Minutes of Meetings*

The first Ghana Alternative Medicine Practitioners Association (GAMPA) was formed in 1997 with seven (7) members. The President was Dr. Berkumah with Dr. Albert Arthur as a member. The Second has a membership of nine with the late Dr. Mathew Kyei as the President. Others were Dr. Julius Bedie and Dr. Albert Arthur, currently the Acting President of the association.

#### *Interviews*

##### *Early history*

The full history of Naturopathy in Ghana was provided by the key informant. We found that Naturopathy was practiced as far back 1960s. The 1960s to 1970 saw the movement of CAM activities in Ghana, especially Naturopathy, osteopathy, and, Homeopathy. Naturopaths included osteopathy procedures but were demeaned by the Medical Practitioners. The Medical Practitioners focused more on Physiotherapy activities and recognized them as compared to the Naturopaths with osteopathic backgrounds. The Naturopaths excluded osteopathy in their practice. Some were frustrated and died.

Early Ghanaian practitioners received correspondence training. Others were trained through the apprenticeship system. Course materials were sent to the student in Ghana as self-taught, exams, are taken and resubmitted to the educational schools. One Dr. Afram we learned had scholarship opportunity from Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to travel to Britain to receive education in Naturopathy. Indian Board of Alternative Medicine (IBAM), Kolkata, India, the school was the predominating school practitioners received education in CAM especially homeopathy, Naturopathy, and nutrition.

There was no formal education at the time until 2004 when Homeopathy without Borders started coming to Ghana to provide education. 2010 saw new colleges such as Endpoint, Gewah, and C4C Homeopathic Medical colleges started formal homeopathic education.

The emergence of the Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology saw the College becoming a highly regarded training facility after 2016 in Modern Naturopathic Medicine. All subsequent training institutions receive their accreditation from the Traditional Medicine Practice Council of the Ministry of Health to start offering either Homeopathy or Naturopathy.

Nyarkotey College focused on modern Naturopathic education development until 2021 when it started its application for accreditation to offer a Higher National Diploma and Bachelor of

Technology in Naturopathy and Holistic Health Sciences (students can major in Naturopathy, Homeopathy, Naturopathic Chiropractic, Naturopathic, Osteopathy, etc). The college developed the first National Occupational Standards in Naturopathy and Holistic Health Science and pushed for a Sector Skills body for CAM under the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET).

The first batch of Modern Naturopathic students were fifteen (15) at the Professional Certification level. The college became an educational member of the World Naturopathic Federation (WNF), Canada.

Interviewee reports indicate that many practitioners were trained through 'apprenticeship' with other practitioners. Evidence also suggests that several foreign practitioners practiced in the country, especially in the fields of Chiropractic Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Ayurveda.

For instance, Dr. Marcus Mann set up the Chiropractic and Wellness Center at East Legon and Dr. Bryan Leon Cox set up the Spinal Clinic Limited at Lashibi, Tema. Dr. John Jiang Aijun started the Beijing Clinic at Osu for Traditional Chinese Medicine.

#### *Uniformity in Naturopathy in Ghana*

There is no uniformity in Naturopathy in Ghana. There are small split-up associations. In 2016, Prof. Raphael Nyarkotey Obu also became the first National President of the Alternative Medical Association of Ghana (AMAG)(graphic.com.gh, 2016), and he later established the Ghana Association of Naturopathic Physicians (GANP) in 2021. He resigned from the Alternative Medical Association of Ghana (AMAG), which was engineered by a renowned Homeopathic doctor, Dr. Michael Kojo Kyeremanteng of C4C homeopathic hospital fame. Later, a consensus was reached to merge the two associations which AMAG, the newly formed alternative medicine association accepted and merged with GAMP. As of 2021, the association is still dormant. Prof. Nyarkotey Obu, thus, decided to focus only on naturopathic medicine promotion.

#### *The Council (TMPC)*

The Traditional Medicine Practice Council as of 2020 application form for practitioners has been amended to include Alternative Medicine which was absent before 2020. The new Application form (Form A) with serial No: TMP2020A7/0000217 used for this write-up has "*Traditional African and Alternative Health Practitioner*". Section IB: The type of practice that allows one to tick has the following practices:

- i. Traditional African/Ghanaian Health Practices
- ii. Complementary Health Facility Assistant
- iii. Alternative Health Practices
- iv. Herbal Medicine and
- v. Medical Herbalism

On the form, it is only alternative health practices that have another space to specify the type(s) of practice, eg, Naturopathy or any type of alternative practice. Medical herbalism is meant for those who graduate from the only Bachelor of Science in Herbal Medicine at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, Kumasi, Ashanti region. The Herbal Medicine program at KNUST was started when the first Traditional Medicine Practice ACT 2000 (ACT 575) was promulgated. There was no program in Naturopathy or alternative medicine on the Faculty as of 2021. However, in 2020, the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS), a government university in HO, Volta Region, had set up a new institute known as Institute for Traditional and Alternative Medicine.

Section V of the form specifies the levels of training of the applicant. The following are found on the form:

1. Apprenticeship
2. Therapist
3. Massage/Manipulative Therapist
4. TCM-Traditional Chinese Medicine
5. Ayurvedic
6. Acupuncture
7. Naturopathy
8. Homeopathy
9. Chiropractic
10. Holistic Medicine
11. Integrative Medicine
12. Bioregulatory Medicine.

Section V further has an interesting column that reads: ***“State if you have been awarded a Title. Yes or No. if Yes, state the Title and the Institution”.***

*Statutory Position on generic titles for Practitioners*

The Council, based on Act 575 has the discretionary power to prescribe titles deemed fit for practitioners. Section 13 of the Traditional Medicine Practice Act 2000 (Act 575) is centered on the ***Titles of practitioners***. It states: *“The Minister, on the recommendations of the Board given in consultation with the Association, may prescribe by Regulations on the titles to be used by practitioners based on the type of service rendered and the qualifications of the practitioners”.* This however creates some ambiguity. The titles should be enshrined in the Act and protected according to qualifications. However, the Act on practitioner registration did not state the kind of qualification needed to be allowed to practice in Ghana. For instance, **Section 9** is on the ***Registration of practitioners***. It states that:

(1) A person shall not operate or own premises as a practitioner or produce herbal medicine for sale unless that person is registered in accordance with this Act. (2) A person seeking full or temporary registration shall apply to the Registrar in the manner determined by the Board.

Section 10 addresses Qualifications for registration, it states:

(I) Where the Board is satisfied that

(a) an applicant has adequate proficiency in the practice of traditional medicine and

(b) the application has been endorsed by any two of the following:

(i) the district chairman of the Association;

(ii) the traditional ruler of the community;

(iii) the District Co-ordinating Director,

it shall direct the Registrar to enter the applicant's name in the register of practitioners and issue the applicant with a certificate of registration on the payment of the prescribed fee by the applicant.

(2) A person issued with a certificate under subsection (I) shall be known as a practitioner for the purposes of this Act.

(3) Registration under this Act is in addition to registration required under any other law in respect of the practice.

Section 10 (I) states that "Where the Board is satisfied that

(a) an applicant has adequate proficiency in the practice of traditional medicine". This statement leaves room for more examination. This is because; *adequate proficiency* is ambiguous. This summed up the case adjudicated in *Poonam Verma vs Ashwin Patel & Ors on 10 May 1996*. Where it was held that "a person who does not know a particular system of medicine but practices in that system is a quack." Hence knowledge could mean both formal and informal; hence, "adequate proficiency" in act 575, is very ambiguous. The law should be straightforward on the qualification needed to practice alternative medicine.

Using the basis of **Section 13**, the council often prescribed the title "*ALT/DR*" on the license for alternative medicine practitioners and Traditional Medicine Practitioners also have the title "*T/DR*". Hence, the title "*alternative doctor*" is based on discretionary power as stipulated in Act 575. Also, the alternative doctor title is a generic one for all practitioners in alternative medicine. The challenge is that; the Council has no policy on the requirement for licensing as an alternative medicine practitioner. Who qualifies for the alternative doctor title? What is the minimum educational requirement for licensing? There is also no writing professional qualifying examination set by the Council for practitioners of alternative medicine. The challenge we found with the Council is the loopholes in the grant of licensing in Ghana, especially for the practice of alternative medicine. Interestingly, **Section 11 (d)**, which deals with the *Temporary registration of non-citizens* is very expressive. It states that: *A person who is not a citizen may be temporarily registered as a practitioner where that person:*



(d) *“has proof of **qualification** and registration to practice in the country of origin or where that person was trained”*

## DISCUSSION

Some renowned Professors have raised many concerns about the activities of unqualified Naturopaths in Ghana([newsghana.com.gh](http://newsghana.com.gh), nd). Professor Badu Akosa notes:

*“Some of these people speak with so much authority such that Ghanaians believe them; these are naturopathies, naturopathic practitioners, computer doctors, people who can say they can melt fibroid,” he said.*

*“And all these people are preying on the ill-health and sensitivity of the people of Ghana.*

*“I want us to begin to talk about the health of Ghanaians. Who should be doing these things? Which of these people is going against any standard practice? So that in the end, I say the patients who should be at the center of the healthcare industry will benefit sincerely from the knowledge that is generated in health,” he added.*

*He said: “People can’t just get up and begin to prescribe diets for people. People are now saying if you’ve got fibroid and this is the reason why you got the fibroid, and they are doing all sorts of things.*

*“And the complications that they provide get back to hospitals with all the inadequate staff and at the end of the day, Ghanaians are the worst for it.*

*“And I think it is time, let’s sit down and let’s debate. Who is an herbal practitioner? Who is a naturopath? What knowledge do they acquire before they get that?*

*“You can’t go and bring a family health guide and read and come and stand on television and speak to people as if you are an authority. It’s not done anywhere. And it should not be allowed in Ghana,” he said. People are using computers to make diagnoses, people are writing 19 drug prescriptions. Is that what we should be doing in our healthcare system industry?*

*“And because people are on the radio, people assume that they have the authority and the right to do what they are doing.*

*“I’m saying let’s all sit down, and let’s talk health,” he said.*

We believe that there are issues to be addressed in the practice of Naturopathy, especially in the modern era. Naturopathy in the 1960s cannot be the same Naturopathy practice in the modern era. Indeed, Nyarkotey Obu and Aggrey-Bluwey raised the issue of those who practice “Radio Naturopathy” in Ghana which was coined by Prof. Raphael Nyarkotey Obu. We explain that these people collect materials from any website, read from books, sit on radio and Television and educate the public on natural medicine without a sound education, which is dangerous to our health sector. They have the title “Doctor” attached to their names and are supported by the media(Obu & Aggrey-Bluwey, 2021).

This research study examined the historical antecedent of Naturopathic Medicine in Ghana. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first paper in the West Africa –sub-region to track the history of Naturopathy. This was done as Naturopathy has gained momentum with the development of the first-ever Higher National Diploma and Bachelors in Naturopathy sponsored by Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine & Technology (NUCHMT) with a team of lecturers at the college.

It can be inferred that Naturopathy in Ghana takes solace under the CAM umbrella and the historical antecedents are linked together. When we conceptualized this study, we were faced with the challenge of an appropriate research method or tool to use due to the difficult nature of finding the right respondents or experts to assist with this important study. We had no option but to rely on one key person in the CAM industry. Hence, we had to adopt Delphi Technique for this study. We found that most of the early Naturopaths who practiced or studied between the 1960s and 1970 had died. We were also told by the key informant that one was poisoned. Some were bedridden, others are not in active clinical service.

What we found interesting is how one who acts as the key informant was able to elucidate all the contributors from the 1960s. He was able to keep track of each and everyone including expatriates and the dead ones. He was also able to keep records of those practitioners who used dubious means to accumulate wealth in the industry. He has in position every document on those who used dubious means to practice in Ghana. He is loaded with the information in CAM in Ghana. We found that activism has resulted in several naturopathic students. Modern Naturopathy in Ghana is self-governed by the Association of Naturopathic Physicians Ghana, made up of Medically trained Naturopathic Medical graduates from Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology (NUCHMT). There is also the Naturopathic Medical student association as a student body in the Ghanaian Naturopathic space at the college. The future of Naturopathic Medicine in Ghana is bright with the work of Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology (NUCHMT).

What is needed in Ghana is the promulgation of the bill to strengthen the profession. There is also the need for legislation to govern the scope of Naturopathic practice. The scope of Naturopathy has been widening in other jurisdictions such as North America with prescription and other rights. In Ghana, Naturopathy is subjected or linked to only Natural therapies. This was manifested in one situation where Nyarkotey College had an issue with the regulator on Naturopathic Medical students' master class session on minor surgery. An informant sent this information to the regulator who wrote to the college not to include minor surgery in Naturopathy training. The school had to write to the Council to explain in detail with evidence why Naturopathic Medical students needed Minor surgery in their training as future Naturopathic doctors.

For instance, In 2009, in North America, advocacy resulted in registered naturopaths being granted the right to prescribe certain categories of pharmaceuticals(Eggertson, L, 2010).

#### *Professional Naturopathic Education*



*Fig 1. First Batch of Modern Naturopathic students at Nyarkotey College*

As in many other regions, early training of naturopathic practitioners focused on clinical apprenticeships and teaching clinics. The challenge in Ghana was that the Traditional Medicine Practice was unable to accredit institutions to run the higher education program by law. The Council only accredits certificate programs in CAM. Accreditation is a very difficult thing in Ghana at the tertiary level.

Eventually, in 2021 Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology (NUCHMT) brought naturopathic education into the university sector as a private institution to offer accredited Higher National Diploma (HND) and degree programs, and this aims to influence the prospective standard of education. The curricula were also sent to the World Naturopathic Federation for benchmarking which pecked the Bachelors at 76% on Naturopathic Medical knowledge.

The World Naturopathic Federation notes on the curriculum feedback on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021: *“Naturopathic medical knowledge: this area seems well represented in the curriculum with 57% in the Diploma and 76% in the Bachelor program, but we encourage you to ensure that the percentage of hours spent in medical knowledge is balanced with the total number of hours. and that the naturopathic medical knowledge content is integrated into the naturopathic philosophy and principles”.*

## CONCLUSION

In Ghana, the recent momentum in the profession of Naturopathy is engineered by the work of Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology (NUCHMT). There is no research on the development of Naturopathy in Ghana. This study is the first to highlight the historical development of Naturopathy in Ghana and the West African sub-region. The authors have tried to highlight the development from the 1960s to the present contributors. We look at the early Naturopathic contributors and modern Naturopathic contributors.

Currently, in Ghana, the Traditional Medicine Practice Act 575 has no jurisdiction over CAM. However, CAM has recognition as a result of the Ministerial directive that was given to allow the Council to see to the affairs of CAM. In the presenting situation, there is a new bill pending promulgation to pave way for legal CAM backing. Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine and Technology (NUCHMT) has played an integral role in the modern Naturopathic era in education and curriculum development under the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTEVT).

### *Acknowledgments*

We thank Dr. Albert Arthur who granted permission to access the archives and disclose his identity as the key informant for the interview

### *Competing Interests*

The authors declare that they have personal relationships with Nyarkotey University College of Holistic Medicine & Technology (NUCHMT)

### *Authors Contributions*

RNO conceptualized the study and conducted the key informant interview. Both authors triangulated the interview responses with archival records. LAB critically reviewed and proofread the manuscript for publication.

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