

Naturopaths support tougher regulation of complementary medicine

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Naturopaths are strongly in favour of regulation of their industry, a University of Queensland researcher has found.

Naturopaths believed that regulation would lift the quality of practitioners, improve patient safety, promote research and allow for greater collaboration between complementary and conventional medicine, researcher Jon Wardle, a PhD student with the School of Population Health, said.

"Naturopaths represent the largest group of complementary medicine practitioners in Australia. Studies show that around half of all health consultations are with complementary medicine practitioners. By dragging their feet on this issue, governments may be putting patients at risk," Mr Wardle said.

His study confirmed earlier findings that practitioners were not the barrier to regulation of complementary medicine in Australia.

"In fact naturopaths want more regulation and more collaboration with conventional medicine, rather than less", he said.

"A small, but vocal section of the complementary medicine industry disagrees with tighter regulation and this is portrayed as the industry view. However, this is not representative of grass-roots practitioners."

A review of the regulation issue by Mr Wardle found that most

professional natural therapist associations, the Australian Medical Association and government reports from the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Victorian Department of Human Services have strongly advocated regulation.

The review found that surveys conducted by professional associations showed patients were overwhelmingly in favour of ensuring minimum standards of practice and the Australian Medical Association, in addition to a raft of medical literature, specifically identified the lack of regulation as a major hurdle to the integration of complementary therapies.

"Despite support of patients, the medical fraternity, government agencies and the practitioners themselves government in Australia has made no serious moves towards regulation," Mr Wardle said.

Source: University of Queensland

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