

Tradition and trust: building confidence in naturopathic and herbal medicine

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For referencing Arentz S. Tradition and trust: building confidence in naturopathic and herbal medicine. *The Australian Journal of Herbal and Naturopathic Medicine*. 2025;37(2):64-65.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.33235/ajhnm.37.2.64-65>

Welcome to the Winter 2025 issue of the *Australian Journal of Herbal and Naturopathic Medicine*. There is so much to acknowledge at this time in our history: following another highly successful Naturopathic Symposium the NHMRC's Natural Therapies Review Expert Advisory Panel (NTREAP) review has confirmed sufficient evidence to support the use of naturopathy and herbal medicine; and the federal health minister, Mark Butler, has publicly endorsed the practices within public healthcare, including a recommendation to reinstate private health insurance rebates.¹ We also welcome five new editorial board members and pay tribute to the late, great Linda Bates — a longstanding friend of the NHAA and a deeply respected figure in our community. Linda served on the NHAA Board, contributed at countless conferences and seminars, and played an integral role in practitioner education, especially through the Environment and Sustainability Special Interest Group, a cause close to her heart. In 2023, Linda was honoured with Life Membership of the NHAA in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the association and to the advancement of herbal medicine in Australia.

Please join me in thanking Sonya Byron, Claudia Joy Wingo, and Dr Ses Salmond for their heartfelt contributions, and especially Ses for curating this beautiful tribute. Honouring those who have passed, whose work laid the foundations of our practice, is a vital tradition in naturopathy and herbal medicine - never more poignant than in celebrating the life of Linda Bates, a quintessential traditional Western herbalist.

This quarter's editorial reflects on a theme central to the profession — how we communicate the value of traditional naturopathic knowledge through rigorous, transparent, and person-centred research. As a profession, we are well-positioned to contribute to this evolving evidence base.

In research, 'quality' reflects the level of confidence in a result — shaped by the study design, the methods used, and the transparency of reporting. Evidence-based medicine (EBM) has evolved to place greater emphasis on outcomes that matter to patients. For example, an improved LDL level may seem promising to practitioners,

but it holds less significance to the patient if angina pain continues. Patient-reported outcomes, when measured using validated tools, are now recognised as central to meaningful healthcare research.

Traditional practice observations, when paired with evidence-based research, create an opportunity to systematically describe, quantify, and validate clinical insights already being used by practitioners. Scientific research contributes transparency, impartiality and methodological rigour — qualities that strengthen the credibility of traditional knowledge, not only within healthcare systems but also in the eyes of patients, many of whom see science-based ways of knowing as part of their cultural framework.

The widespread use of traditional and complementary medicine also contributes a practical advantage to naturopathic and herbal medicine research. Much of the foundational knowledge around safety and therapeutic effect comes from human use, reducing the need for early-stage preclinical studies in animals. However, as the World Health Organisation (WHO) has emphasised, transparency remains critical across all traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine (TCIM) disciplines, including naturopathic and herbal medicine.

The WHO's recent statement underscores this message: "research into traditional medicine (TM), including naturopathy and herbal medicine, must address cost-effectiveness and sustainability."² It is essential to evolve from anecdotal accounts toward an evidence-based framework that supports generalisability, predictability and reliability of care. This is the contribution that research makes to clinical practice, helping practitioners anticipate outcomes, supporting trust in the care people receive, and encouraging recognition of naturopathy and herbal medicine by other healthcare professionals.

At the WHO Regional Summit, Professor Georg Seifert noted that successful integration into healthcare systems depends on mutual trust between TCIM and biomedicine. That trust, he emphasised, grows from research that is methodologically sound and culturally respectful. He also described the potential for a global network of integrative clinical centres that reflect both scientific standards and therapeutic diversity.

Along with a comprehensive summary of recent, relevant research by Dr Wendy McLean, this issue of AJHNM presents four original research contributions to the evidence base:

- A case report exploring changes in autonomic tone in women with PCOS following the use of castor oil packs
- A clinical trial protocol evaluating the use of cold throat compresses for modulating cardiac autonomic function
- A meta-analysis of clinical trials investigating the effects of *Annona muricata* (soursop) on hyperuricaemia for people with gout
- A case series assessing the use of *Melaleuca alternifolia* (tea tree) oil in managing lumbar spondylosis-related pain

Together, these studies reflect the richness of contemporary naturopathic and herbal medicine research.

To support the increasing volume and scope of submissions, we are delighted to welcome five new editorial board members. Each brings research expertise and a shared commitment to advancing rigorous, person-centred evidence in our field.



Dr Jessica Bayes is a clinical nutritionist and researcher who has worked extensively in the health and wellness industry for the past 14 years. She completed her PhD at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Faculty of Health, researching the emerging field of Nutritional

Psychiatry. She has previously conducted clinical trials, including testing the effect of a Mediterranean diet on the symptoms of depression in young men, which highlighted the powerful effect that food can have on mental health.

She is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow, in the National Centre for Naturopathic Medicine, at Southern Cross University. She is continuing her work in Nutritional Psychiatry, and is developing a program of research that centres around diet and mental health, aiming to support vulnerable populations with a 'food as medicine' approach. Her current focus is on neurodiversity, and understanding how lifestyle factors, such as diet, influence mental wellbeing in Autism and ADHD.

She is passionate about advancing research through community led research projects which align with the needs and preferences of the neurodivergent community. She is currently the Deputy Chair and Research Officer for the Northern Rivers Autism Association (NRAA) and also an Executive Committee member for the Australian Society for Autism Research (ASfAR). She is dedicated to advocating on the importance of natural medicine

and lifestyle interventions for health and wellbeing, particularly highlighting the crucial role of natural health practitioners in clinical care. Jessica hopes to uphold high quality research and impactful publications which support the naturopathic profession as a whole and enhance the integration of naturopathy across the health care system.



Hi, I am Tristan Carter, a PhD candidate and Research Associate with the Australian Research Consortium in Complementary and Integrative Medicine (ARCCIM) team at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

After completing my Naturopathy degree, I pursued a career in research to explore and elevate the ideals of naturopathy and the philosophy guiding naturopathic practice, particularly in its intersection with public health. My passion for advancing this field led me to join the editorial board, where I can contribute to shaping the discourse on naturopathic endeavours and advocate for research that strengthens the profession's framework and evidence base.

As a Research Associate and PhD candidate, my focus is on paternal preconception health and care, particularly in the realm of preventive health. Through research, publications, and presentations, I aim to deepen our understanding of male health prior to reproduction and its broader implications.

My long-term vision is to support research initiatives that engage Naturopathic practitioners and patients, with an emphasis on Traditional, Complementary, and Integrative Medicine. By championing public health empowerment and reinforcing naturopathic philosophy through research and education, I aspire to drive meaningful advancements in the field.

Gemma Davies



Gemma has been a naturopath and herbalist for over 22 years. With a career spanning clinical practice, industry, and education, she now focuses on writing and research. Her work supports solo practitioners, manufacturers, and educators alike. She joins the board with a passion for

rigour and innovation in the literature and a commitment to elevating the naturopathic and herbal professions.

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Dissemination policy:

Protocol availability: The protocol is freely available.

Author contribution:

Conceptualisation and writing: Madhivanan Maveeran.

Investigation and methodology: Arunthathi Kathiresan

Editing, review and statistics: Aruchunan Moovendhan

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Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the institution for providing the opportunity to do this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

The authors received no funding for this study.

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Dr Alison Maunder Alison is a qualified naturopath with a special interest in fertility and reproductive health. She recently completed her PhD at the NICM Health Research Institute (Western Sydney University), investigating naturopathic

approaches to managing diminished ovarian reserve. She also holds postgraduate qualifications including a Master of Philosophy, Master of Medicine (Reproductive Health and Human Genetics), and Master of Herbal Medicines from the University of Sydney. Alison has lectured and supervised clinical training at Endeavour College of Natural Health and is passionate about integrating evidence-based complementary therapies into women's health. She joins the editorial board with a commitment to advancing person-centred integrative healthcare through evidence-informed practice.



Dr Asmita Patel, PhD Born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand, Asmita holds a doctorate in public health from Auckland University of Technology. Since 2013, she has conducted research across traditional Chinese medicine, naturopathy, and herbal medicine. She is currently

serving as Research Manager at South Pacific College of Natural Medicine in New Zealand. She is passionate about qualitative research into client experiences and

integration of modalities and advocates for regulation of naturopathy in New Zealand.

We are delighted to have these researchers join our team, strengthening the journal's ability to respond to a rapidly growing and diversifying field. Their expertise will help us meet the challenges of increased submissions and the evolving standards of research in naturopathy and herbal medicine. Please join me in welcoming them.

We hope this issue offers inspiration as we continue to grow a profession grounded in both tradition and evidence. We warmly invite presenters from this year's Naturopathic Symposium to consider submitting their research, case studies, or reviews to the *Australian Journal of Herbal and Naturopathic Medicine* — your work contributes meaningfully to the evidence base and helps shape the future with Australian and New Zealand perspectives..

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Keep warm

Susan

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