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# Lawmakers Move Closer to Passing Legislation to Expand Use of Natural Medicines in USVI

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**Acupuncture needles for woman's body. By. GETTY IMAGES**

Lawmakers on the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services have voted to amend legislation that would expand the use and licensing of naturopathic medicine in the territory.

Senator Genevieve Whitaker, who moved the measure to modernize the legislation, said an Act was passed on December, 10th 2001 to practice naturopathic care in the U.S. Virgin Islands, however treatment was not fully implemented.

Naturopathic medicine combines natural healing agents with scientific research to create an alternative form of medical treatment.

The amendment expands and clarifies the definition of naturopathic medicine and the physical modalities used in the practice of naturopathy to include electrotherapy, diathermy, hydrotherapy, naturopathic manipulative therapy, and acupuncture.

Daniel Seitz, executive director of the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education said that the changes would allow qualified naturopathic pharmacists, physicians, and herbalists to become licensed to practice within the territory using a clear licensing process.

“These programs are accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education which means we have to live up to a very high standard of precision in the work that we do,” he said.

“Graduates of these programs are safe and effective practitioners and by licensing practitioners, there’s a way for the public to be able to distinguish between well-trained practitioners and maybe those who may only be marginally trained,” said Mr. Seitz.

Practitioners of natural medicine will be considered as certified once they complete programs offered at the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME).

Aziyza Shabazz, an esthetician/physical trainer at Aziyza Nature’s Spa, said expanding the scope of naturopathy would allow alternative treatment for the elderly population who are often times “reluctant” to accept allopathic or mainstream medicines.

Patients for naturopathic medication will be determined based on consultation with doctors.

Ms. Shabazz said the naturopathic physicians will make the determination after reviewing the factors presented when a patient comes for consultation.

According to Seitz, training will be facilitated at the Naturopathic Medical Education.

The cost of naturopathic treatment would be based on a number of factors including how many qualified practitioners operate within the territories.

“Typically, states will base the cost on the number of practitioners. It depends on whether the Legislature feels that the fee should be able to support the work of the board or not – so there’s a judgement call on that,” Seitz explained, adding that the cost may be higher to become certified if there is a small number of people applying to practice naturopathy.

Bill No. 34-0244 will be forwarded to the Committee on Whole for further consideration after being approved in the Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services.

To complete the regulation section of the law, lawmakers must also pass a bill that addresses the composition of the Board of Naturopathic Medicine which is expected to be heard by the Committee on Rules and Judiciary shortly.

The Virgin Islands is one of 26 jurisdictions within the United States and its territories that have provisions for naturopathic medicine.