

Abstract

This thesis describes how Ontario naturopaths developed an educational institution in Canada to stimulate the process of professional formation. Given the unfamiliarity of the complementary and alternative medicine terrain among scholars of higher education, the third sector, and of the professions, this study attempts to clarify the nature and location within civil society of naturopathic medicine's educational foundations in Ontario. CCNM's evolution as an institution had as its original goal the meeting of educational and clinical skills standards recognized inside and outside its immediate communities. However, some of the institution's professional stakeholders understood early that it was desirable to have available to it the benefits of mainstream higher education, especially degree-granting authority. The path to that authority proved to be complex and elusive as the college found its way from private ownership into the nonprofit domain.

These aspects of the institution's development are in turn part of the larger story of the continuing evolution of health care in Canada. The attention scholars interested in professional formation give to the educational frameworks of emerging professions is rooted in the wish to describe those often institutionalized training arrangements as part of a larger understanding of how those groups take their place in civil society. I trace key institutional developments ranging from an informal effort in the late 1970s by the leaders of the Ontario College of Naturopathic Medicine [OCNM] to affiliate with the University of Waterloo, to the emergence of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine [CCNM] some fifteen years later as a private post-secondary institution exhibiting many characteristics of the higher education community medical schools which it had attempted to emulate from the outset.

This study also reviews the more widely circulated concepts, terminology, definitions and issues revolving around that sector of CAM occupied by “nature-cure” doctors who currently practice naturopathic medicine. With these definitions and understandings as a foundation, and with a typology in hand which helps define and classify the naturopathic college within civil society as a useful framework, this thesis documents the institutionalizing of naturopathic medical education in Ontario in its first quarter century, between 1978 and 2003.