

**AANMC**

**2015 Graduate Success and  
Compensation Study**



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## Study Background and Objectives

The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC) conducted a compensation survey to understand overall averages in salary and compensation for physicians practicing naturopathic medicine. The objectives of the current research included:

- Identify salary and compensation ranges of naturopathic physicians, especially as these relate to full-time/part-time commitments, and tenure in the profession.
- Collect information on non-salary benefits such as vacation time and insurance benefits.
- Understand best practices in the industry for increasing business opportunities and patients.
- Examine how dual/multiple degrees affect salary/compensation, and satisfaction with the practice of naturopathic medicine.

Alumni from all seven member schools were invited to participate in this study.

## Methodology

Marketing General Incorporated (MGI), specialists in marketing and research for professional and trade associations, conducted this study. Initial invitations were sent to survey recipients by email starting on August 5, 2015. Four total emails were sent over the course of three weeks. AANMC member schools provided the participant email list which contained alumni. Due to Canadian Anti-Spam Laws (CASL), Canadian schools sent emails to their own alumni. Net of duplicate records, the total count of eligible email addresses contained 5,201 possible participants.

In return for their participation in the survey, respondents were invited to submit their contact information for a chance to win one of three prizes: iPad mini, Fitbit, or a \$50 Amazon gift card.

## Response Rates

5,201 email invitations were sent to member schools' alumni. Of those emails sent, 264 emails bounced, reducing the total to 4,937. The emailed invitations resulted in 1,289 completed surveys yielding a response rate of approximately 26%. This study's significance level of .05 carries with it a 95 percent confidence interval. The confidence interval is established as the likelihood that the same results would be achieved in a similar study, meaning that if we were to conduct this study 100 times, the same results, plus or minus the margin of error (2.7%), would occur 95 out of 100 times.

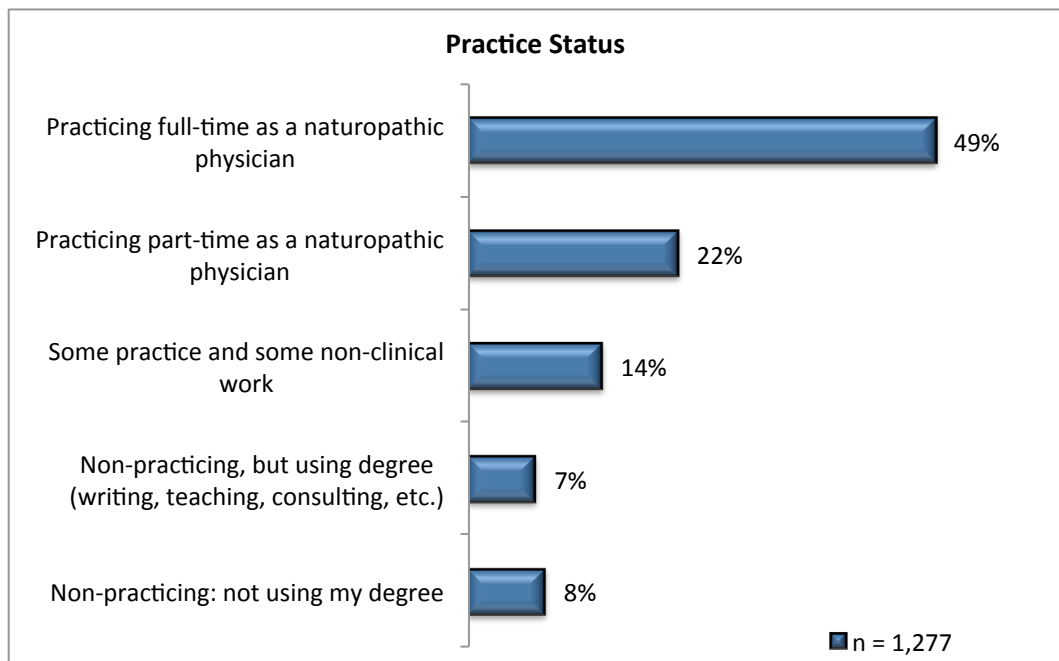


## Who Participated in the Study?

The majority of participants are female naturopathic medical school graduates (76%). The median age of participants in this study is 39 years old, and a majority is based in the United States (60%) (of note, the median age of graduates has decreased since 2000, dropping from age 34 in 1999, to ages between 28 and 32 since then, and eighty-four percent work in states or provinces in which a license is required).

A multi-national sample, about 40% of participants graduated from one of the Canadian naturopathic medical colleges with 34% having attended the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, while the remaining 60% graduated from naturopathic medical colleges in the United States with the largest percentage having attended the National College of Natural Medicine (24%). While 66% of graduates rate their school as good or very good, participants did suggest possible areas of improvement to focus on that would include greater preparation for the business-side of practicing medicine.

Seventy-six percent of participants graduated with a degree in naturopathic medicine in four years or less, and almost 90% passed their board exams on the first attempt. Of alumni surveyed, 92% report they are using their naturopathic degree in their careers, and 58% reported finding employment within 0-3 months of graduation.



\* Part-time = less than 32 hours per week

## Professional Practice

### Entrepreneurs and Team Players

Ninety-two percent of survey respondents are currently using their degree. Of those using their degree, 65% have been in practice for up to 10 years, so many of the participants graduated in 2005 or later. Of all the participants, 67% own or co-own a practice. Of those who own a practice, 45% own a solo practice out of a clinic or office, and 21% own or co-own a private multi-disciplinary practice. Of the 33% who do not own or co-own a practice, most work either in a private multi-disciplinary group practice (39%) or in a private group practice with other naturopathic physicians (30%).

### Patient Focused

Participants spend the most time on patient care and patient charting/documentation. When asked how they view themselves, 46% of practicing NDs consider themselves to be primary care physicians while 31% feel they are adjunctive care/natural health specialists. Those practicing in a state or province requiring a license are more likely to consider themselves to be primary care doctors (51% vs. 14%).

The most common areas of practice focus include digestive/GI disorders (60%), nutrition (58%), and women's health (54%). Over four in ten participants specialize in endocrinology (46%), general medicine (44%), herbal medicine/botanical medicine (43%), primary care (43%), and/or insomnia/fatigue/fibromyalgia (42%).

Of the practicing NDs participating in this study, 43% perform injection-based procedures, 29% perform intravenous procedures, and 22% perform manipulative medical procedures. Thirty-six percent of practicing NDs do not perform any invasive procedures. This is especially more likely for those working in states or provinces that do not regulate the practice of naturopathic medicine (76% vs. 31%) and would depend on an additional license or certification that allows them to do so legally.

### The Business

When it comes to promoting one's practice, participants are most likely to network with other doctors (51%), utilize social media platforms (51%), and do speaking engagements (50%). Fifty-six percent of participants actively engage in some method to market their business or practice for at least one hour per week. Median salary figures indicate that the most efficient amount of time spent marketing is between one to two hours weekly.



Of those participants who are practicing, 53% indicate their practice has a cash only reimbursement model and 45% report a combination of cash and insurance as their reimbursement model. More than half of the practicing NDs offer a sliding scale or discounts for their services.

#### Cash and Non-Cash Compensation

Before entering ND school, the average annual salary (personal, gross, pre-tax), was \$38,857 in the United States and \$34,497 in Canada. Thirty-four percent of participants were unemployed before attending ND school.

After attending ND school, the average salary for participants practicing or using their degree part-time (32 hours per week or less) is \$47,108 in the United States and \$49,757 in Canada. Data show that part-time salaries increase steadily the longer one has been practicing.

For those practicing or using their degree full-time, the mean salary after graduating is \$89,392 in the United States and \$74,043 in Canada, more than double their annual pay prior to entering naturopathic medical school. Findings indicate that having multiple degrees (another degree in addition to the ND) can boost one's salary. On average, the salary boost is almost \$5,000 annually in the United States for naturopathic physicians with an additional degree.

Overall Income After ND School						
	All		Employee		Owner	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Part-time US	\$47,108	\$35,000	\$40,341	\$40,000	\$48,532	\$30,000
Part-time Canada	\$49,757	\$30,000	\$42,038	\$30,000	\$54,099	\$30,000
Full-time US	\$89,392	\$75,000	\$92,572	\$80,000	\$87,914	\$72,000
Full-time Canada	\$74,043	\$55,000	\$65,788	\$55,000	\$78,697	\$55,000

This increase in earning potential does not come free as the average amount of student loan debt accrued in ND school is about \$167,156 in the United States and \$100,821 in Canada.

According to a 2014 survey conducted by the Association of American Medical Colleges, the average debt of medical students in a private medical school was \$190,053, over 50% of graduates owe more than \$200,000 and nearly 10% owe more than \$250,000.

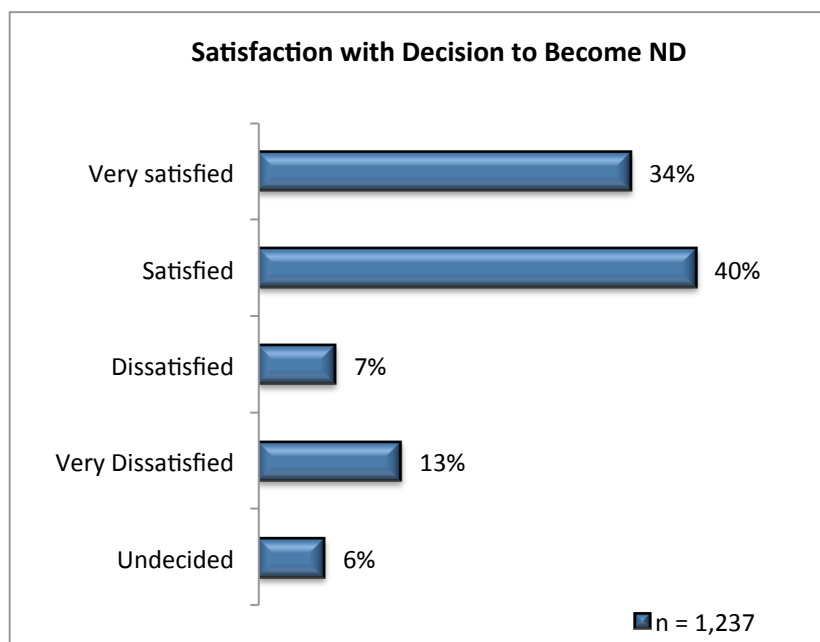


In regard to “non-cash” compensation for NDs, the most often-received non-cash benefit is reimbursement for professional development/ continuing education. Those working full-time are also highly likely to receive health insurance if in the United States, or dental insurance if in Canada. The mean number of vacation days earned is about 13 annually.

### ND’s Demonstrated Greater Career and Personal Satisfaction than their MD Counterparts

Almost 50% of study participants (48%) would recommend naturopathic medicine as a profession. Similar to data from *The Physician’s Foundation: Survey of America’s Physicians 2014*, this statistic is on par with the percentage of MDs in the United States who would recommend becoming a physician (50%). Remarkably, a 2012 study done by The Doctors Company indicates that nine out of ten physicians are unwilling to recommend health care as a profession while NDs working full-time and those who own or co-own a practice illustrate greater support and possible satisfaction of their chosen career as they are more likely to recommend the naturopathic medical profession.

Three-quarters of participants are satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to become an ND (74%) while just 67% of conventionally trained physicians in the United States would choose to become an MD again if they had to do it again (Shanafelt et al., 2015).



Forty-nine percent of participants practicing or using their degree are satisfied or very satisfied with their income. This is especially true for those practicing full-time, and those using their degree in a non-clinical setting.

Seventy percent of graduates are satisfied or very satisfied with their work-life balance as well. Those participants working the number of hours they want to work are most satisfied with their work-life balance. Similarly, those most satisfied with their income are also most satisfied with their work-life balance. By comparison, in a study done by the Mayo Clinic, only 41% of American physicians agree or strongly agree that their work schedule leaves them enough time for personal and/or family life. Similarly, 49% of Canadian physicians are satisfied or very satisfied with their work-life balance.

When asked, 56% of ND graduates feel financially successful in their career and 77% feel successful overall in their career. Fifty-seven percent of American graduates and 51% of Canadian graduates feel financially successful. Furthermore, those who feel successful overall in their career are more likely to be satisfied with their decision to earn an ND degree, their income, their work-life balance, and their financial success. Those who consider themselves successful overall are also more likely to rate themselves as passionate about the work that they do.

## Summary

The leadership of AANMC understands that success of their mission to “...advance the naturopathic medical profession by actively supporting the academic efforts of accredited and recognized schools of naturopathic medicine...” is, in part, understanding the hopes, dreams, and goals of their members’ customers...the students. Framed properly, this information can be used as a strategic tool to foster student and school success for existing and future programs of naturopathic medicine.

Naturopathic medical professionals truly extoll the virtues we associate with “healers”:

- A desire to work directly with patients and spend meaningful time in the interactions.
- Willingness to earn less in order to pursue their calling.
- Driven to align their career with personal philosophies and ethics.
- A strong orientation towards altruism.
- A desire to achieve a “work-life balance.”

These individuals want to project a unique identity as intelligent and well trained professionals who possess a strong desire for self-improvement as they seek to find worth that goes beyond what some may consider to be more common financial or socio-economic measures.



Appreciation of this has strong implications for the practical implementation of the programs that support AANMC's Mission:

- Provide a "...challenging, humane and holistic medical education experience."
- Create and support the communication and "...Public awareness (programs) supporting Naturopathic Medical Education."
- Outline the scope and topics of "...Naturopathic medicine research that improves the knowledge about the teaching/practice of naturopathic medicine."

Future actions will center on supporting graduate success and curriculum that prepares our graduates to excel in the health care system.

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