

Naturopathic choice makes mainstream

By Katie Robinson
NEWSLEADER STAFF

Choices for medical services will soon become available.

A commitment to integrate alternative health care options into the mainstream health care system was announced in last Tuesday's provincial throne speech. Employees, students and patients at New Westminster's Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine (BINM) are ecstatic.

"This will give people more choices for their medical needs," said Dr. Isis van Loon, dean of clinical studies at BINM.

Allopathic medicine, which focuses on drugs and surgery to actively kill cells, smother symptoms, or heal dysfunction and disease, is the only method acknowledged in B.C.'s current health care system. Yet, van Loon believes alternatives are long overdue.

Naturopathy brings together various natural healing therapies that include homeopathic remedies, acupuncture, Oriental medicines, massage therapy and hydrotherapy for the treatment of all types of illnesses. It promotes healthy food and exercise, but not drugs or surgery.

"Many times we fit in before drugs and surgeries are even need-

ed," van Loon said.

"But with conventional medicine seen as the only perspective, people don't know that other options exist."

She feels people choosing naturopathy are being penalized in the current system by having to pay for lab tests and clinic visits. And as a result, services are being duplicated with patients going to conventional

physicians to avoid paying for such tests.

"The system right now doesn't respect people's choices," said van Loon.

"It needs a change."

N e w
Westminster MLA

Joyce Murray has been using naturopathic services for 30 years. She believes the government's promise won't just benefit naturopathic doctors and users, it will benefit everyone on the health care system.

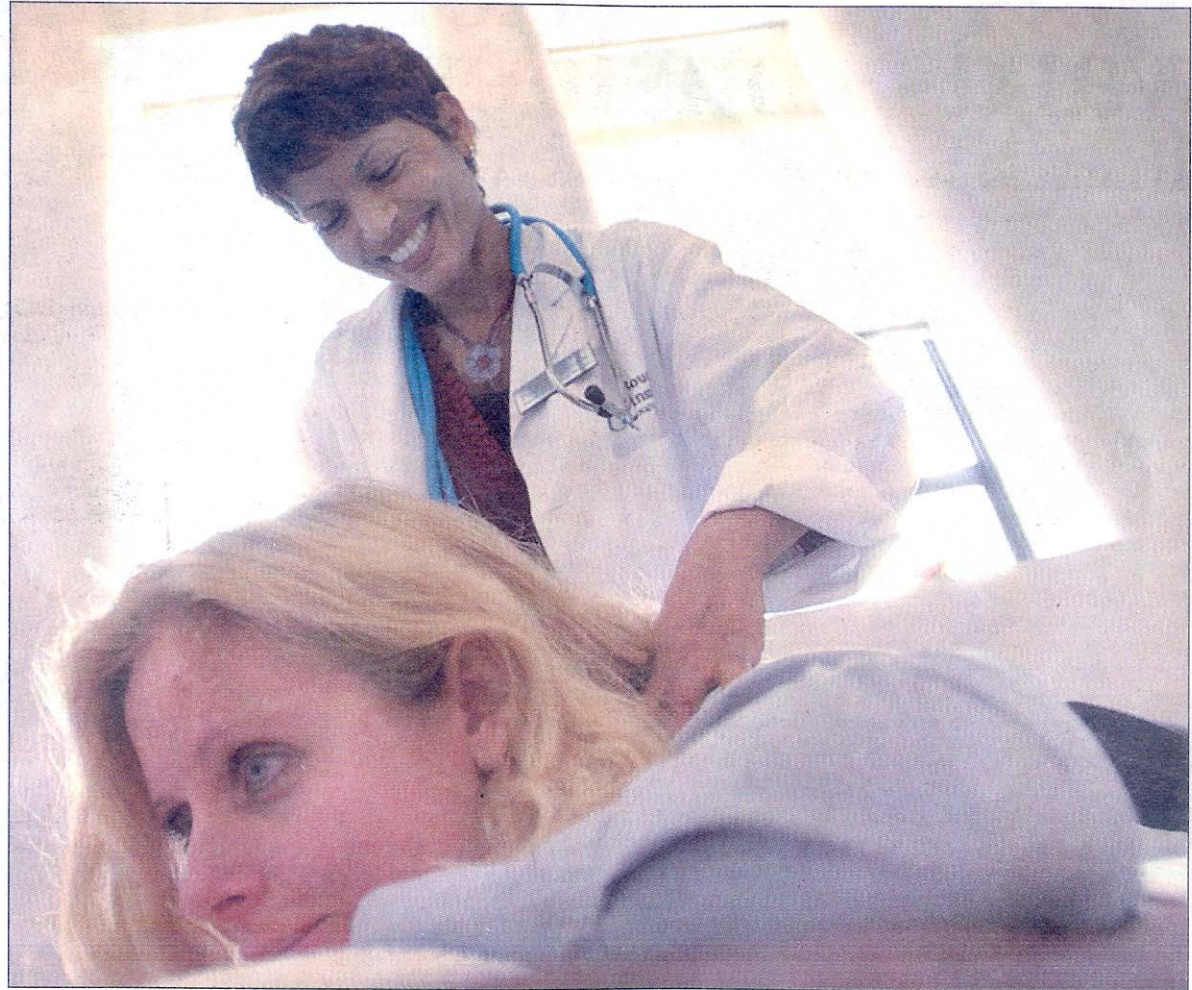
"Pharmacare won't go up when there are natural remedies available ... this is a long-term, cost-savings plan," she said.

The next step is getting the stakeholders and the government together to see how the alternative methods can be incorporated into the system.

"This isn't an end point, but it is a milestone," Murray said.

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~ Dr. Isis van Loon



KARI MEDIG/NEWSLEADER

Fourth-year naturopathic medicine students Pushpa Chandra and Anita Cordick practise their craft at the Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine on Monday morning.