

Doctors question claims of alternative treatments

From page 11.

with someone not well-trained."

While some providers can offer patients only one type of treatment, Ms Zimmermann said naturopaths have been formally trained in a wide variety of remedies.

Those remedies include homeopathy, botanical medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, physical therapy and lifestyle counselling.

She said today's patients are turning to alternative treatments because they are better informed. In generations past, people were more

apt to blindly follow their doctor's advice.

As a veterinarian, Ms Drouin said she comes from a background of traditional medicine.

However, Ms Drouin, thinks naturopathic medicine can offer patients a more holistic approach to healing and is impressed with its positive effects in both people and animals.

"It works, quite simply. There are very few side effects and generally there is no or a low level of toxicity (associ-

ed with the medications).

"We are ending up with highly educated patients. They are very educated about their treatments," she said, adding those treatments are tailored to individual needs.

Dr. Zatzman also cautioned people not to be duped by claims of "natural" remedies.

"I love that people have an understanding of the healing process and there are more questions being asked of what we're doing.

"They're not tacitly accepting of what we're doing. So many (medications used by naturopaths) are

very safe. At worst, they don't get results people want. But they don't do any harm."

But Dr. Zatzman finds many of the claims of alternative medicine providers hard to swallow.

He encouraged patients to tell their doctors of any pills or medications they are taking, warning that alternative medicines can conflict with prescription drugs.

Some alternative remedies can come in doses that are dangerous, he added.

Arguing that patients should be aware that providers of alternative medicines are running businesses to make money, Dr. Zatzman also cautioned people not to be duped by claims of "natural" remedies.

"The perception is natural is good. Cancer is a natural thing too but cancer is not good, is it?"

"I basically feel when people say they went to a naturopath and say he or she gave them this or that regiment of potions and say it will cure diabetes or high blood pressure, I always say if this really works, I would know about it as your family doctor.

"It wouldn't be a secret that only naturopaths or herbalists know about."



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

York Region naturopathic doctors Anke Zimmermann and Autumn Drouin say credible practitioners of alternative treatments undertake significant training and education before hanging out their shingles.

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