

# NATUROPATHS WITHOUT BORDERS



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# Global Healing, Naturally

## MISSION TO MEXICO

Rocky Point residents delivered from depression, diabetic neuropathy, bursitis & more

by Jamie Oskin, ND

ONE WEEKEND A MONTH, A DETERMINED CARAVAN OF NATUROPATHIC students and physicians makes the 5-hour drive from Tempe, Arizona, to beautiful Puerto Peñasco, Mexico, on the Sea of Cortez (also known as the Gulf of California). With its stunning views, clear waters, and abundant sea life, this formerly sleepy fishing village has become a popular tourist destination in the last 10 or 20 years. “Rocky Point” (its English name) is sometimes even called “Arizona’s beach” because at just 65 miles over the U.S./Mexican border, it is Arizona’s closest coast.

Our group pulls into the town around 11 p.m. Friday, just in time to check into a small hotel and get some sleep so we can wake early for the big day ahead. While the natural beauty of the ocean is certainly a draw, we won’t be parasailing, scuba diving, or beach bumming at a fancy new resort. Instead, we’ll head to the dusty, windswept, unpaved streets on the outskirts of town, where many families live in rundown, hand-built shacks or reclaimed rail cars and have little or no access to health care. We’ll spend our day in a church, seeing patients in a makeshift clinic as volunteers for Naturopaths

Without Borders. It’s fast-paced, often challenging, but very rewarding work!

### Healing the world holistically

Naturopaths Without Borders (NWB) is a student-run, volunteer organization with chapters at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe and at Bastyr University in Seattle. Its mission is to heal disadvantaged people around the world using holistic, natural, prevention and treatment. It also seeks to establish naturopathic medicine in the global health community while working to secure health care as a human right. NWB is

involved in a number of global projects, including a full-time naturopathic clinic in Haiti that offers free prenatal, birth, and pediatric care.

In Puerto Peñasco, NWB has partnered with New Birth Mexican Mission, a church that serves the spiritual and human needs of the many people who migrated to the town from other parts of Mexico during the tourist boom. Unfortunately, the economic recession and fears about crime from drug cartels has severely dampened tourism to the area in the last few years, throwing many people out of work.

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE COURTESY OF NATUROPATHS WITHOUT BORDERS





This Naturopaths Without Borders team volunteered for a Rocky Point, Mexico mission in March. That's Dr. Jamie Oskin in the back row center and naturopathic student and translator Ana Jones in the back far right.

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### Hit the ground running

On our most recent trip to Puerto Peñasco, I was among four naturopathic physicians seeing patients and supervising 10 to 15 naturopathic medical students. We arrive early and practice in three upstairs rooms, with open windows and fans to help keep it comfortable. The first-year students get right to work checking in and triaging the many patients, organizing medicines and supplements in the medicine (we bring along many of our supplies), and taking patients' vital signs; the senior students join with the naturopathic physicians in seeing patients.

In the church sanctuary on the main floor, patients line up on a first-come, first-served basis, waiting to be called. Many wait all day and, sadly, when the lines are long, some get turned away. Volunteers from the church play the piano to entertain the waiting throngs. Outside, vendors line the streets with colorful tents and carts of clothing, food, and other items, hoping to take advantage of the extra traffic on clinic days.

### Serious chronic illness

Obesity and consequent uncontrolled Type 2 diabetes are rampant in this population; poverty, lack of education, and subsistence diets of processed foods and refined carbohydrates devoid of nutritional value are large contributing factors.

Without access to health care, many people in the community are walking around with uncontrolled diabetes for years without knowing it. This takes a major toll on the body's organs, and severe peripheral neuropathies (pain and nerve damage in the extremities from diabetes), heart disease, cataracts, glaucoma, kidney disease, and other consequences of untreated chronic illness are common. Mortality rates from diabetes and cardiovascular disease are very high and at relatively young ages, too.

On our most recent trip, I brought along three blood glucose monitors to check non-fasting blood sugar levels, and the results were astounding. One student came to me after checking a patient's blood sugar saying, "Dr. Oskin, I think the meter is broken, this number (525) is way too high..." At this point we used the meter to check my blood sugar, which was 85 (normal), and I had to tell the student that, unfortunately, the machine seemed to be functioning properly but the patient was a *very* poorly controlled diabetic. The student went back to work checking patient vital signs and blood sugar levels and, much to his dismay, soon found people with even higher blood sugars!

### You name it, we treated it

We treated many people that weekend for a wide variety of complaints: shoulder pain, back pain, knee pain, tooth pain, chronic depression, diabetic neuropathy pain, facial paralysis, prostatitis, menstrual pain, and you-

name-it. My laptop with Archibell's RADAR homeopathic repertory software comes in handy on these trips in researching a homeopathic remedy selection for most patients. We also offered nutritional advice, naturopathic supplementation, conventional medications when indicated and available, and appropriate referrals to medical specialists as needed.

Just to give you a little idea, here are a couple of stories of patients first seen in March, who returned for follow-up visits six weeks later when NWB and I made our April trip to Puerto Peñasco.

### Juan's diabetes & foot pain

A tall, dignified man with glassy eyes from cataracts, Juan came to the clinic for help with severe, longstanding pain in his feet. At 68, his wrinkled face and callused hands pointed to a life of outdoor manual labor, and the extra weight he carried around his mid-section indicated possible dietary issues. Despite being poor and walking a long way on hot, dusty, dirt roads to get to the clinic, he wore black dress shoes and black dress socks. (This reminded me of my grandfather!)

I suspected that Juan's foot pain was peripheral neuropathy resulting from uncontrolled Type 2 diabetes and his cataracts might also be related to his uncontrolled blood sugar. Sure enough, Juan's non-fasting blood sugar reading was 490 mg/dl—extremely high (normal non-fasting should be well under 200).

Juan complained that his feet felt like they were constantly burning. He couldn't

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keep them under the covers at night because of the heat and pain. He would wake every night around 3 or 4 a.m. worrying about his finances and how he would put food on the table for his family. He had lots of theories about the pain in his feet; he was surprised and seemed in disbelief when I had to explain to him that it was due to his uncontrolled blood sugar levels. Overall, he was warm-blooded and felt worse in a warm stuffy room; he craved crispy, fatty foods and cold drinks.

due to the homeopathic treatment. I did, however, emphasize to Juan that for long-term protection of his feet (and overall health), he needed to stick to the diet and bring his blood sugars down further.

Since Juan was doing so well on his daily dose of *Sulphur* 6c, we advised him to continue taking the remedy in the same way for the next month and continue changing his diet. We will monitor Juan's condition on our ongoing visits to the clinic; if his neuropathy symptoms should return,

we would likely increase the potency of *Sulphur* before we would consider switching to a different remedy. (As the saying goes, "If

it ain't broke don't fix it!")

### Maria's pre-diabetes, bursitis, & depression

Maria is a middle-aged woman with "metabolic syndrome," which means she has pre-diabetes, high blood pressure, elevated blood lipids, and an increased risk of heart attack or stroke. At her first visit to the clinic, her triglycerides were over 300 (normal is less than 150), her non-fasting blood sugar was 136 (mildly elevated), and her blood pressure was 150/95 (normal is 120/80). She was of average height, yet she was at least 100 pounds overweight at 270 pounds. We spent much time educating her about basic nutrition and exercise as tools to treat her condition.

Maria complained of longstanding right-sided shoulder pain—she had injured

it pulling down a very heavy box from a high shelf. Since then, she couldn't raise her arm above shoulder level without wincing in pain and pulling it up with the other arm. A physical exam showed a sub-acromial bursitis (inflammation of the bursa cushion pad on the top of the shoul-

der). Her shoulder was very stiff when she began to move, but if she continued to move the arm for awhile, it started to work a little better. The pain was much better with warm applications and was worse with cold applications. Based on these classic *Rhus tox* symptoms of an injury feeling worse at the beginning of motion but better from continued motion and from warmth, I gave her a single dose of homeopathic *Rhus tox* 10M.

Maria also revealed that she suffered greatly from longstanding depression. When she began to tell the story, she welled up with tears; she looked down and turned away when I offered her sympathy. She said she was sad because her husband, the father of her three children, had not shown any intimacy towards her in over fifteen years. Every night, while he slept, she would wake and leave the room to go alone to cry and dwell upon the problems in their marriage. She craved salty foods and preferred not to be sitting in the direct sunlight for longer than 20 minutes at a time.

For Maria's depression, I sent her home with *Natrum mur* 200c to take 3 pellets daily; but I asked her to wait at least a few days before starting it—until her shoulder pain began to improve. The accompanying repertorization chart shows the symptoms I used to arrive at this prescription, which include ailments from disappointed love, dwelling on past disagreeable events, being averse to company and consolation, weeping at night and when alone, desiring salt, and feeling worse in the sun.

	nat-m.	ign.	rep.	sulph.	con.	phos.	thui.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
147092076074073071063962							
1. MIND - AILMENTS FROM - love; disappointed (40) 1	4	4	1	1	2	1	-
2. MIND - DWELLS - past disagreeable occurrences, on (54) 1	4	3	2	2	2	1	1
3. MIND - COMPANY - aversion to (172) 1	4	3	3	2	2	1	2
4. MIND - CONSOLATION - agg. (46) 1	4	3	4	1	-	2	1
5. MIND - WEEPING - night (82) 1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
6. MIND - WEEPING - alone, when (5) 1	2	1	-	-	2	-	-
7. GENERALS - FOOD and DRINKS - salt - desire (69) 1	4	-	1	1	2	4	2
8. GENERALS - SUN - exposure to the sun (78) 1	3	1	-	1	-	-	1

I rarely prescribe two remedies at one visit as I did with Maria. But I knew I would not see her or be in any contact for at least another month, and I didn't want her to suffer so much pain and depression in the meantime.

	1	2	3	4	5
825575560545520					
1. EXTREMITIES - HEAT - Feet - burning - uncovers them (28) 1	3	3	1	2	1
2. SLEEP - WAKING - night - midnight - after - 3 h (57) 1	3	-	2	1	1
3. MIND - THEORIZING (27) 1	3	1	1	-	-
4. GENERALS - WARM - room - agg. (130) 1	3	3	3	1	1
5. GENERALS - FOOD and DRINKS - crispy food - desire (8) 1	1	1	-	1	1
6. GENERALS - FOOD and DRINKS - cold drink, cold water - desire (177) 1	1	1	2	3	2

After considering Juan's case and repertorizing his most characteristic symptoms including his burning feet that he uncovers at night, nighttime waking, a tendency to have many theories, and feeling worse in a warm room (see chart), I prescribed homeopathic *Sulphur* 6c, 3 pellets daily.

I also spent considerable time counseling him on basic nutrition to control his blood sugars—a higher protein, low carbohydrate approach, based on the book, *Dr. Bernstein's Diabetes Solution, The Complete Guide to Achieving Normal Blood Sugars* (but simplified and modified for Juan's traditional diet).

I saw Juan six weeks later—and I wish you could have seen the smile on his face when he told me the pain in his feet was *completely GONE*. A wonderful result! He was grinning from ear to ear and speaking in Spanish so quickly that I couldn't keep up without my excellent student translator, Ana Jones. Juan's non-fasting blood sugar level was down from 490 to 320—a very good start, but he still has a ways to go.

So what accounts for the disappearance of Juan's severe foot pain? I treat many diabetics in the U.S. and I have rarely seen longstanding, significant peripheral neuropathy reverse so quickly from lowering the blood sugars alone. Besides, Juan's blood sugar level at 320 is still high enough that I would not expect dramatic improvement in neuropathy from that reduction. Thus, I think the improvement was mostly



MaryK Martin Geyer, ND, and Sean Hesler, ND (foreground) examine a young patient.



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## Uncontrolled Type 2 diabetes is rampant in this population.

We congratulated Maria on her diet and exercise changes and encouraged her to keep up the good work! We look forward to monitoring her continued progress on our future visits to Puerto Peñasco.

### Clear cases, profound responses

Juan and Maria are just two of the many lovely people we were fortunate to help—and they responded beautifully to homeopathic treatment. In fact, most of my patients at the clinic have responded incredibly well to homeopathy, with improvements coming quickly and dramatically. I think one reason is that they tend to present their symptoms in a very straightforward manner. They say, “My pain is located here, and it feels like this, and it is better when I do a, b, and c and worse when I do x, y, and z.” This helps to make the selection of a homeopathic remedy very clear (and it’s a refreshing change from American patients who commonly overanalyze when describing their symptoms).

Another reason for the dramatic results may be that patients in Puerto Peñasco are not taking multiple pharmaceuticals on an ongoing basis, as are so many U.S. patients. Conventional medications can hide or change the symptoms of a person’s actual

### “Complex disease”

Although it is much more common that one homeopathic remedy fits the characteristic symptoms of the entire case, occasionally, two separate remedies are needed as in Maria’s case. Hahnemann called this “complex disease” in Aphorisms 40–42 of the *Organon of Medicine*. Maria’s acute shoulder pain was due to injury and had very clear symptoms that matched *Rhus tox*, while her chronic depression symptoms matched *Natrum mur* very well; yet no single remedy clearly fit both her shoulder pain and her depression. Hahnemann would consider them dissimilar diseases, requiring two different remedies for the two different (dissimilar) diseases. He stated clearly that in these situations, the two remedies should not be given at once, however; that is why I asked Maria to wait awhile before taking the second remedy.

So what happened with Maria? When our NWB group returned six weeks later, she could hardly wait to see us to tell her good news. Through our Spanish translator she exclaimed: “My shoulder pain is completely *GONE*, my depression is *GONE*, and emotionally, I feel like a new

person!” Additionally, she had been very diligent about healthy eating, and her triglycerides were down 150 points to almost normal. Her blood pressure was also normal, indicating that the nutritional changes were helping to begin the process of reversing the metabolic syndrome. It’s certainly possible that the *Natrum mur* had also contributed to this good result, whether by improving her will to make the necessary dietary and exercise changes or by having a direct effect. At any rate, it is clear that the homeopathic treatment helped her shoulder *and* her depression!

**Vendors line the streets...  
hoping to take advantage  
of the extra traffic  
on clinic days.**

JAMIE OSKIN, ND





disease (making it harder for a prescriber to choose an accurate remedy), and they can also mute a person's reaction to homeopathic treatment, as Hahnemann described in Aphorism 41 of the *Organon of Medicine*. While we do treat people on conventional medications and get excellent results with homeopathy, the process is usually lengthier and more complex. So, it's a breath of fresh air to treat a population that has had little exposure to conventional pharmaceuticals—and to witness straightforward, impressive recoveries!

### A joy, a blessing

We have a great crew of volunteer doctors and medical students who make the trip each month to Puerto Peñasco. It is such a blessing to be able to assist the residents of this town who otherwise would have no access to health care! It's a fast-paced trip, and I always leave Mexico wishing we could have helped more people. The warm smiles of gratitude on the faces of our patients linger in our memories and always motivate us to return.

## Dependent on generosity & passion

The success of Naturopaths Without Borders is completely due to the passion of its amazing volunteers, private donors, and generous philanthropic companies supporting its efforts. NWB is very thankful to Treatment Options, the professional division of Standard Homeopathic Company, for a generous donation of homeopathic remedies, which has allowed us to bring excellent homeopathic care to the warm, friendly people at our mission in Puerto Peñasco.

To learn more about NWB or to make a donation of funds, products, or medical supplies, please visit our website at [www.ndwb.org](http://www.ndwb.org).



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jamie Oskin is a naturopathic physician licensed in Arizona. He supervises naturopathic medical students on NWB missions to Mexico. He graduated in 2008 from the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine with high honors. He then completed a one-year naturopathic family medicine residency followed by a second-year homeopathic specialty residency under Stephen Messer, ND, at the Southwest Naturopathic Medical Center that was fully funded by a generous gift from Standard Homeopathic Company. Reach him at 480-456-0402 or [www.aznaturalhealth.com](http://www.aznaturalhealth.com).



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