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Letters to the Editor

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Response to “Naturopathic Physician Prescribing Patterns in Oregon”

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Dear Editor,

We thank Drs Walter and Bradley for their interest, thoughtful appraisal, and comments on our article [1,2].

Our data do indeed suggest that Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) bear disproportionately large exposure to high-risk opioid users, but that NDs are not the generators of this risk. We noted that “only a minority of the high-risk prescriptions were written by NDs,” but that the pattern of care-seeking may require vigilance for high-risk patients. We did not include an analysis of prescribers immediately prior to hospitalization events because we recognize that these events often result from cumulative clinical decisions and are often multifactorial. In an environment of limited data, attempts at attribution of blame may be misplaced.

We also agree that NDs may be useful members of pain management teams. To the extent that “alternative” treatments help reduce pain, reduce reliance on opioid analgesics, improve function, are safe, and are affordable, their inclusion is welcome. Finally, we agree that because patients with high-risk opioid profiles may disproportionately visit NDs, these physicians have an opportunity to positively influence those at risk of opioid-related overdose and death. Appropriate intervention first requires recognizing risk when it is present. Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) can help assure “that providers are aware of all patients’ providers and provider prescriptions,” as Bradley and

Walter recommend. We hope our work may inspire naturopathic physicians to be frequent users of PDMPs.

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