Is Your Health “Expert” Actually Qualified? Dr. Jen Breaks Down Credentials You Can Trust Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Credentials and Red Flags

What programs do they do? What health programs do they do? Do they actually do one? Is it esteemed by physicians that work with them? There are some health coaches I would not work with.

If you know, they went through certain programs because they know those programs are not high quality, right? So that would be another thing like who are their actual mentors?

What doctors are they working with as a team? Because that is really important too, because this is a team approach. Health coaches are part of a team.

They should really not be acting like on their own. It should be part of a team. So many online programs are not credentialed and these are mostly always online.

This is Dr. Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most. Hi, it's Dr. Jenn. Welcome back to the Integrative Health Podcast with Dr.

Jenn. Stay tuned today as this is a solo episode and I'm going to tread through the waters of confusion on labels and credentials basically. So stay tuned.

This is so important to me to walk step by step through the different types of training programs that there is for different professionals. I think this is really important because as we live in a social media world and everyone's an expert, everyone's a wellness expert, many people are confused.

I get DMs all the time like, hey, what do you think of this person? What do you think of this website? What do you think of that? So many of these websites, they tickle us, right?

They tickle our, like what we want to hear, right? Their sales, they know how to rope us in and there are these sale pages. And it's kind of like the dirty side of business and the wellness industry is just a business that people are going hard towards.

And for me, it's really hard to see because this wasn't like this when I started out in medicine and I am still paying off medical school loans. It's honestly like becoming an actual physician, doctor, an MD or DO.

It's a lot of sacrifice. And now everyone just declares himself a doctor and an expert. And this is why we need to break down what these degrees actually mean because yes, it matters.

Yes, it absolutely matters. And I also think that there's a team approach and I have so many good friends and colleagues that have different different letters behind their name, but also the ones that I associate with, they do it with integrity and they are not trying to be something they're not.

MD and DO Training Pathways

I would never try to be a plumber and go to someone's house and say I knew how to be a plumber and fix their toilet when I did not know how because if I did it the wrong way, There would be a flood, right?

And I would be held liable, but the problem is people aren't being held liable, so they can do and say what they want, but there's no liability. And actually, this is why I'm so careful as a DO to actually be careful with what I say and how I present it.

and get evidence-based resources because I am held liable by a state board, but anyone declaring themselves an expert in a field or a health coach, they're not held liable.

A big trend I see as PhDs where they might have their doctorate of education or doctorate of you know, research in something else, not medical. And they just put out there on their social media that they're a doctor, that they don't describe what it is.

So that is actually, before we dive into the content, a big red flag. If you go to someone's Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, whatever profile, even in their email, like header or footer, if you don't know within three seconds of visiting their contact, their website, whatever, what kind of actual doctor they are declaring they are, then it's a red flag and you should just run away, okay?

Because they're hiding something or they want you to think that they're a doctor, a physician, because they're giving you medical information. But they are not.

They do not carry that. They did not get that degree. They did not go through. So that's why we're going to dig in so you guys understand. Like I said, I think there's a part for everyone and we can all work together great, but also just don't be deceitful and don't lie.

And that is just one thing I don't like. There's a lot of deception in the wellness world now. Okay, so there's MDs and there's DOs, so I'm going to break them apart.

So MD is a doctor of medicine, educational path is four years of undergrad, a bachelor's degree, four years of medical school, and this is an accredited MD program.

This is heavily regulated, okay? And then three to seven years of residency training, depending on the specialty. So this is not like you just wake up and you're like, I'm going to do neurology today.

No, no, you would have to do a three year residency for that. This is why it's almost like people thinking that like, you know, a woman thinking they could be a man, right?

It's delusional. This is delusional. You have to do fellowships, residency program that are years long to switch the specialty is you just can't jump ship, right?

Just like an electrician just can't be like, I'm going to do HVAC today. Doesn't work like that. So why are we letting other professions do this? You know, and this is more, we'll get to that camp later.

Who they can do that, which is kind of scary. And then optional fellowships for subspecialty. And there is a liaison committee on medical education. and all US school granting MD degrees must be LCME out of it.

They have to pass USMLE step one, step two, and step three exams and be licensed by specific state medical courts, okay? And a big question is, can they just do this training online, right?

Can they just sit in their room and pass the exams using chat GPT? No. It's in-person training with clinical rotations in hospitals. You're getting mentor.

It's hands-on job. And I'm using the trades a lot with this, but medicine is somewhat of a trade. You have to have a mentor. You have to have on-the-job training.

And then there's Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, DO, and that's me. And the reason why I chose this is because we had extra training in osteopathic manipulative medicine.

So it's like an extra tool in our toolbox, and we tend to see the body more as a whole. So a DO, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, four years of undergraduate.

four years Osteopathic Medical School, which is an accredited DO school, three to seven years of residency, additional training in OMT as I discussed, and their accreditation is the Commission on Osteopathic College accreditation.

We have to pass and then we are licensed by state medical boards. And most of our boards that we have, so I'm boarded in emergency medicine and I'm boarded in integrative medicine, so to sit for those boards so I can practice in an emergency room, I had to meet requirements for that emergency medicine board to be board certified and pass an additional exam and recreditation.

And I had to do an oral board, which is actually, Kind of scary, but it was great. There was a lot of prep for it. And this is where it's like an interview basically and you're given scenarios and how are you going to react.

You don't have a computer to ask help for or a colleague, you're all on your own.

Naturopathic Doctors and Scope Limits

So board certified ER doctors are very special and they are very well trained and prepared, I will say. And then I had to take a test to be board certified in integrated medicine.

And I actually helped sit on the board for that specialty board to help write exam questions. Now let's talk about naturopathic doctor. So these can be two different camps.

And I have friends that are amazing naturopaths and they actually did clinical rotations and went to a good school like Bastyr is one of them, but there's also NDs out there that can be fully trained online.

Okay. So this is where you really have to do your research and be like, where did you train? Was it at this? online school which is a money grab and they just give you this this degree or was it a legit ND school?

There's also this new NMD which is popping up and that is mostly online from my understanding and I am not impressed with that either. So their educational path is four years undergraduate and then four years of an accredited naturopathic school.

However, this is where it's getting hairy over the last few years where some of them are online only. So this is, you have to look if their naturopathic school was accredited or not because some schools are calling themselves naturopathic or traditional naturopath.

And these are online diploma mills. So these are not accredited. So I actually should get one of my naturopathic friends on a podcast to talk about that because a lot of them are really upset about this.

And you have to dig deep because if you just see that ND or NMD after their letters, they might not go to an accredited. school. It could be one of these online diploma mills.

So that is very scary. Now, with Nasher Pass, it depends. Some places they can prescribe medication, some states a few if they go to an accredited school, but mainly they cannot.

I know in Ohio, Nasher Up to where I did most of my practice, they cannot diagnose or treat. So they would want to work with a D or an MD that could help diagnose and treat.

So this brings up a concept that I think is a moral concept too about practicing outside of your scope of practice. And if you have someone or you're seeing someone that declares themselves to be a good person, I don't know.

You know, most, you know, everyone knows that I am Christian. I love the Lord. Like I am going to follow his commands. I'm not going to lie. Like I'm not going to do things outside my scope.

And that's why I went to medical school because I wanted to diagnose and treat and prescribe medication. So if

people are doing this and they're out of their scope, you have to like look at their integrity or ask them be like, Hey, like, are you actually allowed to tell me that I have IBS and prescribe a diet?

Like, I don't think you're allowed to do that. Are you practicing outside of your scope? And if you are, who's your consulting physician that is allowed to do that?

So be careful because if, you know, I mean, it goes to Proverbs, if you are hanging out with fools, you will become foolish. So we don't want that. We want wisdom and we want people doing things that are wise and that are legal, right?

And moral. So let's talk about chiropractic school. So chiropractic school, they have four years of undergraduate and then they have a chiropractic college where it's about 5,000 hours of coursework and clinical internships.

So they don't have to go on and do additional rotations or a fellowship unless they want to get additional specific training, say in like pediatrics or different maneuvers.

And they have an accreditation through the chiropractic educational school. And some examples of these schools, Hallmark College of Chiropractic is really big.

So they are licensed in each state and must pass the board of clinical examinations and they do not have online training. So currently there is no diploma mills that I know of from that one.

Now, PhD, so I see this trend a lot. Everyone just, they just go by doctor on their Instagram and that's totally fine. But then look at the description.

Are they upfront with not only if they're a PhD, but like what they're specifically a PhD in, right? So should someone that's a PhD in education be teaching about health?

Well, yeah, if they go back and get MD or DO, then they can diagnose and prescribe and all of that. It's a slippery slope if they're like seeing patients individually as opposed to just like teaching.

So some examples of health related PhD field could be biochemistry, nutrition, science, public health, clinical psychology. There's a lot of different, you know, there's theology, there's so many different things that you can get a PhD in.

And this is where, you know, are they going back just to have that doctor title or are they actually, did they want to practice like what they're preaching?

You know, if they want to treat patients and diagnose and treat, then they should just go back and be one of these professions that can. So that's tough.

And then there are some online PhD programs, they still have to do research and dissertation. So the PhD, you want to think of more of a research and educator.

Chiropractors, PhDs, and Health Coaches

They are not a clinician. So if they are trying to be or, you know, doing like a program or seeing patients, then that is a red flag. So let's talk about health coaches.

So health coaches is, it's kind of the Wild West. So there's no standardized degree required. And these programs run from a few weekends to two years long certification.

I find this similar to lifestyle medicine that Harvard is really pushing out that is very vegan focused that you just take, I think it's like two weekend courses and you can sit for the board.

And that is terrifying, but it's going through because money talks and they're trying to push this vegan agenda. So. Yeah, I'm not gonna hold back on you guys because this stuff's important and I've been in this long enough to share what's going on.

So back to health coaches. So this is where, once again, what programs do they do? What health programs do they do? Do they actually do one? Is it esteemed by physicians that work with them?

There are some health coaches I would not work with if they went through certain programs because they know those programs are not high quality, right?

So that would be another thing like who are their actual mentors? What doctors are they working with as a team? Because that is really important too because this is a team approach.

Health coaches are part of a team. They should really not be acting like on their own. It should be part of a team. So many online programs are not credentialed and these are mostly always online, right?

And sometimes they do the program and then it's done. So do they have continued mentorship where they can get help? So there's scope of practice. They are not diagnosing, prescribing, or ordering labs.

There are health coaches that will order functional labs. That is not in their scope. That is not in their scope. They can support goal-setting lifestyle change and education.

I mean, that's it. So if you're seeing a health coach that is ordering labs, that might be a red flag. You know, if they're not doing it with, you know, under the guidance of a doctor, under a doctor, that's kind of a red flag.

They cannot look at your lab work and tell you what to do or what to take. They can just, they're just there to support goal setting, right? So a good example of how health coach work is say you're going through like perimenopause and you have a health coach.

And you are like, okay, this is a program I want to follow that a physician made. This is what I need support in. So the health coach would support that.

Be like, okay, are you hitting your macros? Did you work out today? Tell me about how you're feeling. Let's look at your food diary. Oh, you're bloating with that?

Do you think that might be a problem? They're there to give you education. They're there to help, but they're not there to say, I think you have a parasite infection let's do a cleanse right or something like that.

It's just a really slippery scope and this is why it's so hard and there are amazing health coaches out there that work in there within their scope like they're supposed to.

But then I've also seen so many patients get burned by health coaches and spend all this money. It's not what they expected or they're overreaching. They're not doing what they're supposed to.

And then you run in that slippery slope because they don't know what they don't know. They don't, they've never seen someone with a ruptured appendix.

They haven't seen anyone, you know, with headaches for months, but a brain tumor was missed because they were ordering food sensitivities tests and said it was that, right?

I mean, there are things that we, there's a reason there are boundaries. Okay. So just a summary of who can train online. So health coaches, some of my PhDs can be partial online.

MD, DO, certified naturopaths. And chiropractors, DC, not online, must be accredited or in person. So let's go into another area, nurse practitioner and physician assistant.

So nurse practitioners, they usually have a bachelor of science in nursing and then most legit programs, nurse practitioner, they do require them to have experience as a nurse.

And the best nurse practitioners I've known have come from the ICU and the ER. And then they get another thing that they could do. They can get a master's of science in nursing or some of them get a doctor of nurse DMP, which is basically all administrative.

It doesn't make them a doctor of medicine. So it's like this weird scope creep issue that. The lines are blurred and it's weird. Like, why? I just, it doesn't make sense to me.

I have a good friend, Dr. Robin Rose, that she was a nurse practitioner and she went back to medical school because she wanted to be a doctor. And she was like, this is not what they told me it was.

So keep that in mind if you're young or have young kids that want to go into medicine. Have them just become a doctor. Like, just do it. Just get it done.

So the scope of practice of nurse practitioners, they can diagnose and treat illnesses, they can prescribe medications, and then scope varies by state.

Some have full independent practice and some require physician supervision, which would be that mentorship. So this is an example of a nurse practitioner can switch specialties whenever they want.

without doing a three-year fellowship or two-year fellowship or three-year residency program, okay? Just let that sink in, okay? So they can just, you could go to the hospital and see a nurse that just started her first day of being in neurology and has never done a program, I think it's three years now, for neurology, never did it.

So the problem with this is that there are some that have amazing mentorship, right? So they're like, okay, I want to be a cardiology nurse practitioner and the doctor like basically mentors them like it's a residency program.

But this is not what happens. I've talked to so many nurse practitioners that are so burnt out and so upset because they'll get hired to be a cardiology nurse practitioner and they've gotten no training.

Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants

And I had another friend that was like, She started neurology and she literally, she was like, I'm using up to date to treat these patients in the hospital with complex Parkinson's and no one's helping me.

I have no one to ask questions to. Yeah. So this is the problem. Like the hospitals, they are just throwing these nerve practitioners into these positions without proper training.

And no mentorship, because that would cost money to pay a doctor to mentor them correctly. So see where this is not doctor's fault, not nurse practitioner's fault.

It's the hospitals and the insurance companies and the greedy people's fault, right? And then it's like trickled down on patients here, basically, which is sad.

And I've seen it, seen it in the ER a lot, seen it in functional medicine even. Yeah. So then physician assistant, so it's a little different. Four years of bachelor's and then you go into a specific master's level PA program, which is two to three years, and then they have 2,000 hours plus of clinical education.

So they're actually rotating during that. The difference, and I didn't bring this up with nurse practitioners, There are so many for-profit nurse practitioner programs that are very low quality and they graduate the students with minimal clinical exposure.

So these are degree mill programs that barely have supervised training. So this is 100% acceptance rate and

100% pass rate. That is a diploma mill. You cannot accept 100% of people unless you're literally just trying to make money.

and run these people through and this is diploma mills and this is greedy and this is the problem is that it's not strict like MD and DO school. So we this is where we're just running out a lot of problems and a lot of the times I mean I've seen it they'll just open med spas and just whatever you know and that's not what we need that wasn't the point of nurse practitioners it was for all of us to like work together to reach more of the primary care audience so It's a mess, and maybe this is too deep for y'all, but I think we just need to be open and have open conversations with this so we can make it better.

All right, back to PAs. Yeah, and I work with so many MPs and PAs, and I love them all. This is not their fault, right? So with MPs, NP programs tend to be harder to get into.

Not everyone gets accepted, not everyone's passed, and it cannot be online, like a lot of these DNP schools and MP schools. So for all professions, these are like shady programs and red flags, right?

Now for DOs and MDs, we can't really be shady because it's all in-person training. Can we be groomed? Is it pharmaceutical push? Yes, right. But like I went back and did a fellowship in integrated medicine and got out of that.

But there's a lot of low quality predator programs out there. And I think it's like they're preying on someone that they just, they just want the degree.

And I don't know. I mean, when it comes down to it, it's probably like the flesh. It's ego. It's appealing to ego and flesh. And you know, you have to work hard to get these things.

These things should not be easy to get these degrees. And sadly, like sometimes they are. And here I am a cat with me. But, but if you think about veterinarian programs, they're actually really hard to get into.

You don't have all this craziness going on with the health coaches and stuff. Anyway, okay. So there are some naturopathic diploma mills. So like I said, I want to have one of my colleagues that is a naturopath get on.

But you want to look for if it says classical naturopath, that is all online. There's one because I looked it up because I was joking with my husband Chip and I'm like, you should just get one of these online degree programs and you can help me out with my business, but he's too busy doing his job.

So they won't stop sending me information. If I wanted to pay $30,000, I could have an ND letter after my name also if I wanted. We joke about this in medicine.

It's alphabet soup. It's like how many low quality, you know, programs can you do and how many letters can you have after your name? Like, no. And that's like, and that's pride, that's flesh.

But anyway, red flags, naturopathic diploma mills, that would be classical naturopath. Online only, health coaching schools that promises like that you could be a doctor, that you can diagnose and treat, that you can do all the things a doctor can do.

you can if you want to get in trouble and sued and hurt people but you know that's why it's predatory because you're appealing to people wanting to help others which is what we do want to do when we become passionate about health.

There's right and wrong ways to do it. I had someone reach out to me about becoming an integrative NP and she was a nurse and I'm like yeah I'm like that's amazing I'm so happy for you I'm like This should, it should take you to be a well-trained naturopathic nurse or naturopathic nurse practitioner integrative five years.

I, she didn't like my answer and many people message me on Instagram. Like, how do I get into this? Like. It's

going to take years, like years. Like it took me 20 years to get to where I'm at.

Like it takes time. Like we can't have instant gratification because the people that were wanting to help are going to suffer. You have to, it takes time.

Like I'm like, well, it's going to take like two to three years to be an MP. And then you need to do like my mentor Pam Smith, her personalized medicine course is.

top notch. And that's what I'm recommending actually, even over the fellowship I did right now. But anyway, we'll get to that later. All right. For-profit NP programs with big class sizes and minimal clinical oversight.

Like these nurse practitioners are begging to go on rotations with doctors and they have to find their own rotations, which is not not normal, like, like doctors aren't going to train for free a nurse practitioner from a diploma medal.

Does that make sense? Like that's just not how it goes. That's not how medical education should be. So if you're looking for a program, you know, you want to make sure that it doesn't admit everyone, you know, and there's no prerequisites.

You know, there's no interview. There's nothing. You just get to do it. No in-person clinical trains or supervision. Lacks recognized accreditation. You know, that's a problem.

Promises quick licensure or instant credibility. Credibility is gained like from time and effort. It shouldn't be paid for. And oh my goodness, I should bring this up.

How to Vet Credentials and Final Advice

all these like documentaries doctors do and things there it's all pay to play it's pay to play to get it in front of you it doesn't mean they're really an expert it's just to like give them credibility if they don't have the right credentials or they're it's just it's out there and i just feel like i need to like sound the siren on this because it's so deceptive and my DMs are filled with people getting hurt off of this or people are like, I spent $20,000 on this, you know, non-prudential kind of person because they did a sales call and they said they would fix everything and they go appeal to your pain points.

That's what it's called in business. Yeah, and then they don't get better. It's interesting. So for me to work with patients, I have a discovery call and yeah, and Deb that does, we're talking about, I'm like, I don't want you to close them.

Like, I don't want this to be sales. I literally just want to see if we're all a good fit. If the crisis is okay for them. Like, I don't want people to have regrets.

I don't want people to feel uncomfortable. I want them to know what they're getting into. I'm not in it for the quick sales and I love it because she's on the same page.

And then my husband who's in sales is like, yeah, you got to close on that day and all this stuff. And I'm like, I'm sorry. I would rather have a business with integrity than make a bunch of money.

It's not about that. It's about helping people. I can work in the ER if I just want to collect a paycheck. I think that there's a side that people just don't know.

And this even goes with products. And some of my friends will get all these emails at the same time. My friends that do more social media influencing And it's like they're trying to just get as many people to get it on people's news feeds.

And then people will be like, oh my gosh, everyone's using this. And it's just so funny. And my daughter, she'll ask about products and I'm like, oh, they're probably just appealing to your age group and all these people on social

media are talking about it.

And she's like, yeah. And I'm like, yeah. And if it's a good product, that's fine, I guess. But anyway. Okay, so I'll come up with a chart and a blog for you guys so you can know like who can do what, what their training is, can they diagnose, can they prescribe, all this stuff.

So before trusting any credential, First of all, remember, it's just a trick. If you go to their website and you can't see their credentials, okay, let's give them five seconds in case maybe they just have a bad website developer.

But if you can't see their credential in five seconds, then you're done. If you can't see their training within a few minutes, then no. So was the program accredited?

Was the clinical training in person? Are they licensed in F. C.? And what is your legal scope of practice? And if you guys like have a question, you know, if you are, I just had someone and this is why I'm passionate about this.

Like I had someone message me and they were looking at someone to help with like mold stuff. And I looked at their page and I'm like, this is just a sales funnel.

And I referred them to an environmental specialist group where they can find a doctor that's trained in mold. Yeah, I mean, if you can't find their credentials, if they're not upfront about it, If they can't explain how they can legally help you and when they would maybe work with someone else or they would need other oversight, then that's a red flag.

And I just want you guys to proceed with caution. I mean, unless you have unlimited money and time to deal with nonsense, but it's so tough. Okay, so I think that's all I wanted to talk to you guys about.

If you have any questions, I want you to drop them in the chat. I want to know if this solo episode was helpful or not. My goal is to just empower you guys with facts and not fear.

And in this wellness space, I think it's hard because yes, we're living in a broken world. We are prone to sin, right? We will always default to flesh unless our minds are being renewed, right?

As Paul says. And it's hard because I like to think that everyone is out for your best interests, but they're not. They're not. Oh, in the last couple years, the wellness chase is just like dollar signs.

People are spending so much on their wellness. And I think that there are so many good wellness experts out there that are faith-based, that are Christian.

And then there's also a lot that You know, they just are, you get false falseness and you just have to be really careful. You just have to be really careful.

So anyway, I love all of you and appreciate all of you and pray for you guys. And please leave a review, leave a review and I got to get up to my daughter.

So all the mamas out there, multitasking, appreciate you guys too. Thank you. Thank you for tuning into Dr. Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health.

Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your well-being. For more insights and strategies, subscribe to our podcast and visit our website, stay connected, stay healthy, and join us next time on Dr.

Talks, real talks from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.