The Herbalist Charter..

"An Act that Persons, Being No Common Surgeons, May Administer Outward Medicines

"Where in the parliament holden at Westminster in the third Year of the King's most gracious Reign, amongst other things, for the avoiding of Sorceries, Witchcrafts and other inconveniences, it was enacted, that no person within the City of London, nor within seven miles of the same, should take upon him to exercise and occupy as physician or surgeon, except he be first examined, approved, and admitted by the Bishop of London and other, under and upon certain pains and penalties in the same Act mentioned;

"Sithence the making of which said Act, the Company and Fellowship of Surgeons of London, minding only their own Lucres and nothing the Profit or ease of the Diseased or Patient, have sued, troubled and vexed divers honest Persons, as well as Men and Women, whom God hath endued with the Knowledge of the Nature, Kind and Operation of certain Herbs, Roots and Waters, and the using and ministring of them to such as been pained with customable Diseases, as Women's Breasts beings sore, a Pin and the Web in the Eye, Uncomis of Hands, Burnings, Scaldings, Sore Mouths, the Stone, Strangury, Saucelim and Morphew, and such other like Diseases; and yet the said Persons have not taken anything for their Pains or Cunning, but have ministered the same to poor People only for Neighborhood and God's sake, and of Pity and Charity:

"And it is now well known that the Surgeons admitted will do no Cure to any Person but where they shall be rewarded with a greater Sum or Reward that the Cure extendeth unto; for in the case they would minister the Cunning unto sore People unrewarded, there should not so many rot and perish to death for Lack or Help of Surgery as daily do; but the greatest part of Surgeons admitted been much more to be blamed than those Persons that they troubled, for although the most Part of the Persons of the said Craft of Surgeons have small Cunning yet they will take great sums of Money, and do little therefore, and by Reason thereof they do oftentimes impair and hurt their Patients, rather than do them good.

"In consideration whereof, and for the Ease, Comfort, Succour, Help, Relief and Health of the King's poor Subjects, Inhabitants of this Realm, now pained or diseased:

"Be it ordained, established and enacted, by Authority of this present Parliament, That at all Time from henceforth it shall be lawful to every Person being the King's subject, having Knowledge and Experience of the Nature of Herbs, Roots and Waters, or of the Operation of the same, by Speculation or Practice, within any part of the Realm of England, or within any other the King's Dominions, to practice, use and minister in and to any outward Sore, Uncome Wound, Aposelmations, outward Swelling or Disease, any Herb or Herbs, Ointments, Baths, Pultess, and Emplaisters, according to their Cunning, Experience and Knowledge in any of the Diseases, Sorea and Maladies beforesaid, and all other like to the same, or Drinks for the Stone, Strangury or Agues, without suit, vexation, trouble, penalty or loss of their goods;

"The foresaid Statute in the foresaid Third Year of the King's most gracious Reign, or any other Act, Ordinance or Statues the contrary heretofore made in anywise, not withstanding."

Competing interests: Consultant to many industries on safety and regulatory issues including the natural health product industry. Member of New Zealand Ministry of Health Expert Working Party that advised on the reporting and management of medical injury in the NZ health system. I have no commercial interest in NHPs and use them infrequently.

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