



**BALNEOLOGY**  
ASSOCIATION  
of NORTH AMERICA

## **Resetting Balneology in a Post-Covid World : Understanding the ESSENTIAL Values of Wellness, Health and Con- valescence**

All present at this roundtable can without hesitation see, understand and explain the healthful and therapeutic values of Balneology as a range of wellness and rehabilitation practices. Especially in our host country of Russia, the cultural value of regular visits to the Banya or to Hot Spring Resorts for retreat are well known. Around the world, colored by cultural variations, many societies know of the value of retreat, rest, hydration, and hot springs.

Russia, and indeed many leaders whom consider and practice water centric therapies in the world, has contributed to the academic and medical understanding of the value of Balneology and Balneotherapy for the rehabilitation from injury or chronic debilitation. Just as the ancient myths of fountains of youth described, enfeebled bodies undergoing a proper course of Balneologic treatment, are returned to a state of mobility, pliability, elasticity, and ease.

This past year, however, the global COVID pandemic has challenged many views of how the practice of Balneology can fully and openly operate in society as well as how we can serve our communities and operate as businesses with water practices overcoming vulnerabilities.

In North America, The Balneology Association of North America (BANA) has been bringing together thought leaders from across the continent on a monthly basis to create a virtually hosted dialog of Source-Site Specific Balneological Best Practices. We have spoken to hot spring owners, government officials, scientists, doctors, universities and hot

spring advocates. We have formed relationships with other organizations with common goals, such as the Hot Springs Association (HSA) who have a working understanding of the business mechanics of operating Balneology Resort Sites during COVID times. We have brought to the North American conversation our mission for promoting Balneological Best Practices, BANA Ten Domains of Wellbeing and the BANA FlowFormula template by synthesizing what we are seeing and learning from international examples set by Balneology Associations from countries all over the world, as well as international organizations such as FEMTEC and the International Society of Medical Hydrology (ISMH). What we have learned in this process is that the world of Balneology has been and continues to be deeply affected and radically impacted by this Planetary Pandemic Pause.

This current period has highlighted the diminished role in which physically based medicine has been applied in the modern healthcare landscape. Prior to the rise of the modern pharmaceutically based practice of medicine, physically based medicines, such as balneology, were utilized to treat a variety of conditions, from chronic autoimmune disease, to metabolic disease, to infectious disease. Beyond active intervention, many institutions recognized that proper convalescence from an illness was an essential element to prevention of future need for care.

North American Balneology Sites have all had to ask themselves one key question when facing how they are to operate during the Pandemic, "Am I Essential?" Businesses deemed as ESSENTIAL have legal, as well as cultural abilities to re-open their doors to the public as their services are required. Are we now able to call on support from our communities to recognize the deep cultural practice of Balneology as ESSENTIAL?

BANA advocates for Balneology not only for wellness, rehabilitation and recreation, but also to treat, enhance, complement and complete all forms of convalescence.

The viewpoint of BANA is: All mineral water sites, including hot springs and cold springs, offer Balneological services that are ESSENTIAL. BANA sees it is time for a renewal and revival of the potential and actual practice of Balneology as a mainstay in active therapy and convalescence.

As a core part of our work we have taken from international models the applications of Balneology - Wellness, Illness, Rehabilitation - and cross referenced them with roles and development criteria across the field of Balneology - policy, healthcare, research, business administration, geology, climatology, to create the BANA Flow Formula template. We developed the BANA Flow Formula template as one tool of our Source-Site Specific Assessment program. The BANA Flow Formula template aids individual Balneology Sites in deepening an understanding of their identity and the potential of their site as an Essential Wellness, Health and Medical Service.

## Balneology Association of North America

BANA Template - Tool for Wholistic Assessment of Site Specific Water Sources

	Stewardship Environment	Well-being/Hygiene Wellness/Health	Therapeutic Clinical	
Health Promotion				Resources/ Plumbing
Active Management		<i>The Waters</i>		Relationships/ Politics
Restoration/ Recreation				Renewal/ Percentages
	Research Information Education	Research Information Education	Research Information Education	

When the Source-Site Specific identity of Balneology locations have been charted, we work with the surrounding communities and commerce systems to expand into the identity of the regions the waters source from. We see the future of Balneology encompassing a multifaceted economic identity in towns across North America. Giving each region its own supportive network and narrative to build an experience around the core of The Healing Waters and Resources of Nature.

From the established practices of wellness, rehabilitation and recreation, and all the associated commercial support structures, to the revival of Balneology as an ESSENTIAL wellness, health and medical service, along with trained medical staff, therapists, attendants, and such, Balneology can provide for the personal health and social convalescence of the current infectious crisis, and in this way begin paving the way forward towards robust care for any potential 21st century Planetary Pandemic.

Thus far in the pandemic, no known outbreaks have occurred at hot springs in the US.

Individually, States and Counties each feature mandates that support their own health regulatory systems. Some sites in a state and or county are completely closed causing economic hardships for the sites. There are those operating at 50% capacity or more that say even at half capacity, they are busier than ever as wellness is being sought out in ways that are unheard of in a length of time.

Sites that are open and operating have completely changed how they do business. Businesses are running safer than ever with protocols in place that have been guided from international and national conversations about COVID and the best practices to enact now that the safety of each person is of utmost importance. Owners are going to the far end of extreme approaches to have safe conditions.

People are looking for opportunities for wellness and improving their lives by going to the waters.

A site in southern California recently welcomed a car filled with friends who drove 5 hours from San Francisco to use waters for the day and then drove another 5 hours to return home.

Attention is accumulating for Balneology when students from major universities are seeking information to write papers about the healing aspects earned at a hot springs from a hospitality point of view.

The values of Balneology are reaching all levels of humanity through the recognition of what intrinsically and instinctively calls out to us to help ourselves to heal.

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