

In Harmony: RUSH Cancer Integrative Medicine Program Newsletter

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Cancer Integrative Medicine Program
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Integrative Medicine @ Rush University Medical Center

Welcome to the Fall 2008 edition of "In Harmony" – a newsletter dedicated to educating Rush University Medical Center (RUMC) cancer patients; family members; and health care teams about the supportive role integrative medicine has in cancer care.

What is integrative medicine? Integrative medicine is a general term that is used when complementary medicine (i.e., massage, acupuncture, meditation) is used in combination with conventional western medicine (i.e., chemotherapy). The purpose of integrative medicine is to help patients address the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of health and illness.

The Cancer Integrative Medicine Program is conveniently located in Suite 950 of the RUMC professional building and provides patients with a number of services to help reduce anxiety, pain, fatigue and the undesirable side-effects of cancer treatments, and increase quality of life and a feeling of well-being.

The services available via the CIMP include:

- nutritional counseling
- herbal counseling
- massage
- acupuncture
- biofeedback
- medical hypnosis
- individual counseling
- yoga

Each of the integrative medicine practitioners working with the Cancer Integrative Medicine Program are licensed, hold premier levels of education and training in their respective fields, and work in close collaboration with patients and their health care team to address each patient's unique needs in a gentle and compassionate manner. ***For more information or to schedule an appointment call 312-563-2531.***

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AT A TIME**

**FREE
NUTRITIONAL
COUNSELING (*)**

**INTERESTED IN
MASSAGE OR
ACUPUNCTURE ?**

ANNOUNCEMENT

Interested in learning simple and easy techniques to help you feel more balanced in mind, body, and spirit? The CIMP is offering Rush cancer patients, family members, and friends the chance to participate in a 4-week mind-body skills program. The program will teach participants safe and simple mind-body skills such as breathing, meditation, and visualization which have been found effective for dealing with the stresses of daily life and coping with chronic illness.

Space is limited. Registration fee is \$20.

Nutrition: Taking One Bite at a Time

By Cheryl Sullivan, MS, RD, CNSD, LDN
Clinical Dietician

Chew on this, an estimated 1/3 of the 500,000 cancer deaths that occur annually in the United States (US) are related to dietary factors.¹ Research estimates that 2/3 of cancer deaths in the US can be linked to poor diet, obesity, lack of exercise and tobacco use¹. Several organizations have created cancer prevention guidelines with respect to diet. These organizations such as the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDA) and the American Cancer Society (ACS) are in agreement that maintaining a healthy weight throughout life, adopting a physically active lifestyle, and consuming a healthy diet with an emphasis on plant foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains aid in the prevention of cancer. In addition, limiting consumption of red meats, salt intake and alcoholic beverages is recommended.

While experts agree that optimal nutrition during treatment is very important, several challenges can come up after treatment begins. Nutrition related side effects are individual to each patient and depend on the type of treatment and the duration of treatment. Regardless of treatment type, most patients experience anorexia (loss of appetite) and dysgeusia (taste changes). Other nutrition related side effects can include nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, xerostomia (dry mouth) or mucositis (sore mouth and throat).

Anorexia is a loss of appetite or desire to eat and prolonged anorexia can lead to malnutrition that can have negative effects on anticancer treatments. Malnutrition can also impair one's ability to heal after surgery and recover between chemotherapy cycles (rebuild healthy cells that are being damaged in the process). Although hunger cues are often absent, adequate nutrition could not be more critical. Typically, smaller more frequent meals are better tolerated with an emphasis on high calorie and high protein foods. When experiencing a decreased appetite, it is recommended to eliminate foods that are considered "low fat," or "low calorie," as additional calories are required to help repair healthy cells. Learning to look at your meals and asking yourself, "is this meal as nutrient dense as it can be?" is often helpful when only able to tolerate small amounts of food at a time. General tips include melting cheese on entrees or dicing hard boiled eggs and adding them to salads or casseroles. These small changes affect the nutrient content of meals, yet not necessarily the amount of food consumed.

Certain cancers can result in weight loss, thus more calories are needed to maintain weight than before treatment. Weight maintenance during treatment is associated with a better response to treatment, a decrease in severity of side effects, faster ability to heal, and a better tolerance to treatment and improved survival.^{2,3}

While adding calories to your meals is something most people often avoid, choosing the right food is important. While fat contains a lot of calories, not all fat is created equal. Choose unsaturated fats (found in most fish, nuts, seeds and oils from plants) while limiting saturated fat and trans fat. Choose complex carbohydrates such as whole grains in the form of breads and pastas and limit simple sugars. Aim to consume at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Add additional chopped vegetables to your soups, carry vegetables or fruit as a snack and try at least one new fruit or vegetable a week. Fruits and vegetables are packed with powerful phytochemicals that have shown very promising anti-cancer properties in recent research.

Throughout your treatment, nutrition plays an important role in your overall care. Often times, nutrition can become a burden on the patient and caretakers. A Registered Dietitian (RD) is available through the Cancer Integrative Medicine Program at Rush and is available to offer nutrition advice. An RD is an individual who is considered the food and nutrition expert after having met academic and training requirements. Thus, the dietitian is qualified to provide accurate nutrition guidance.

References for this article are available upon request

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