

In Harmony: RUSH Cancer Integrative Medicine Program Newsletter

Cancer Integrative Medicine Program
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Integrative Medicine Program Available for RUSH Cancer Patients

Welcome to the Spring 2008 edition of *In Harmony*, a quarterly newsletter dedicated to educating cancer patients, family members, and health care teams about the role of integrative medicine in cancer supportive care.

NEWS!

FREE art therapy on Tuesdays from 1-3 pm available to patients in the treatment rooms in Suite 855 (Prof. Bldg)

FREE 10-minute chair massages available on Thursdays in Suite 855 (Prof. Bldg)

Interested in YOGA? Call us to inquire about upcoming program offerings.

CIMP offers a unique 6-week relaxation program available to cancer patients and family members. Call for more information.

In October 2006, Rush University Medical Center announced the creation of the Cancer Integrative Medicine Program (CIMP). The program was created to provide cancer patients with the opportunity to incorporate complementary therapies (e.g., nutritional counseling, massage, acupuncture) with traditional cancer



care (e.g., surgery, chemotherapy, radiation) in an effort 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.***

The Role of Integrative Medicine in Cancer Care

By Angela Johnson, MSTOM, LAc, MPH, Dipl OM

Did you know that there are over 10 million cancer survivors? Surveys show that approximately 30 – 80% of cancer survivors are electing to incorporate complementary therapies into their traditional cancer care.^{1,2} According to the American Cancer Society, complementary therapy is defined as a therapy that is used *in addition to* traditional cancer treatment. The five therapies that are considered to be the most popular among cancer patients include acupuncture, massage, nutritional counseling, mind-body therapies (e.g., imagery, meditation), and supplement/herbal counseling. Studies have revealed that patients are

incorporating complementary therapies into their traditional cancer care because it gives them an opportunity to take an active role in their own care. As it turns out, doing so may be beneficial as “research indicates that patients who are involved in their own care and who take an active role in their treatment, feel better and in some but not all studies recover better.”³ When cancer patients are asked why they are interested in complementary therapies, most report a “hope of boosting the immune system, relieving pain, and controlling the side effects related to disease or treatment.”⁴

Drug-Free Options for Managing Cancer Related Symptoms

By Angela Johnson, Dipl OM, MSTOM, MPH, LAc

Even though it is often difficult for research to identify *how* complementary therapies work, evidence-base studies are revealing that a variety of complementary therapies are able to provide some desired relief. The following outlines recent research on four common symptoms associated with cancer, these include cancer pain, anxiety/stress, fatigue, and nausea/vomiting.



Studies are demonstrating that complementary therapies may be able to play a significant role for cancer patients in terms of symptom management and increasing one's general sense of well-being.

Cancer Pain

According to *MD Anderson Cancer Center*, approximately 30% of persons with cancer experience pain. The cause of cancer pain varies from person to person. However, the origin of most pain stems from pain from a tumor; pain from cancer treatment (e.g., chemotherapy, radiation, surgery); or other painful conditions.

Fortunately, there are several drug free options that have been found effective at reducing pain. For example, a recent study published in the medical journal *Oncology* demonstrated that several complementary therapies provide relief with pain management. These include acupuncture, mind-body therapies (e.g., imagery, hypnosis), massage and reiki.⁵ Another study published in *The Cancer Journal* demonstrated that patients who incorporated acupuncture into their traditional cancer care decreased pain intensity by 36%.⁴

Anxiety / Stress

According to the National Cancer Institute, persons with cancer experience anxiety and stress for a number of reasons. This includes, but is not limited to, poorly controlled pain, the side-effect of certain medications, and an inability to cope with the diagnosis and/or treatment. A study recently published in *The Cancer Journal* identified that patients receiving massage can experience a 19% to 32% reduction in feelings of anxiety.⁴ Similarly, another study published in the journal *Cancer Control* stated that the strongest evidence for benefits of massage is for reducing stress and anxiety.⁷ Additionally, meditation, relaxation, and music therapy has also been found effective in mitigating stress.¹⁰

Fatigue

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) considers fatigue to be one of the most common complaints amongst people with cancer and cancer survivors. The NCI estimates that 14 – 96% of those undergoing active treatment experience fatigue. “Fatigue may be defined as a condition characterized by distress and decreased functional status related to a decrease in energy. The specific manifestations may be physical, mental, or emotional.”⁹ A recent study published in *The Cancer Journal* found that some patients with persistent fatigue benefit from acupuncture and massage.

According to the *National Comprehensive Cancer Network*, nausea and vomiting in persons with cancer is caused by a variety of factors. These include (1) the cancer itself; (2) chemotherapy; (3) radiation; (4) certain medicines, (5) bowel obstruction, (6) anxiety, (7) infections, (8) and other diseases or illnesses. The complementary therapies that have been found effective at helping to diminish nausea and vomiting in adult cancer patients includes acupuncture; guided imagery, hypnosis, relaxation training.⁴ Massage has also been found to be effective in relieving nausea in women with breast cancer who are undergoing chemotherapy.

Conclusion

While there is a wealth of information available about complementary therapies, it is useful to keep in mind they are not meant to substitute for western medical care. Rather, they should be used *in conjunction with* traditional cancer care. As mentioned earlier, studies are demonstrating that complementary therapies may be able to play a significant role for cancer patients in terms of symptom management and increasing one's general sense of well-being. Most importantly, remember to (1) have open communication with your family and health care team about your interest in complementary therapies and, (2) do your homework to find practitioners who have the appropriate background, education, and training. For your own safety it is extremely important that patients work with trained specialists.

References available upon request

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