

Summer 2009 In Harmony

The Cancer Integrative Medicine Program newsletter for RUSH cancer patients, their family members, and health care team

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Cancer Integrative Medicine Program
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Cancer Integrative Medicine Program: A Path to Healing

The Cancer Integrative Medicine Program at Rush University Medical Center is committed to providing patients with a variety of integrative therapies that address their unique needs during all stages of cancer care – from diagnosis to treatment and beyond. Some of the benefits of integrative therapies include relieving stress; easing muscle tension and pain; reducing anxiety and depression; decreasing nausea / vomiting; and increasing energy and well-being.

Our team will work with you to help determine which of the following services may be most beneficial to your healing process:

acupuncture, biofeedback, guided imagery, herbal counseling, individual counseling, massage therapy, medical hypnosis, nutritional counseling, and yoga.

Upcoming Programs / Services

In Fall 2009, the Cancer Integrative Medicine Program will be including **Shiatsu**, a Japanese form of bodywork, in our list of available services for patients. Shiatsu will be provided by certified practitioner, Sally Kupczyk, RN.

For more information, please call
312-563-2531

ACUPUNCTURE @ RUSH HELPING YOU DURING YOUR JOURNEY WITH CANCER

by Angela Johnson, MSTOM, Dipl OM, LAc, MPH
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According to the National Cancer Institute, acupuncture is a component of traditional Chinese medicine that has been used for thousands of years to prevent and treat disease. Acupuncture is the gentle placement of tiny hair thin stainless steel needles, in certain places on the skin, to cause positive change for patients physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Recent advances in clinical research suggest that acupuncture is a safe treatment and may provide several clinical benefits for cancer patients experiencing treatment-related adverse effects. Surveys show that approximately 31% of persons with cancer incorporate acupuncture into their care. According to the National Cancer Institute (ACI), the strongest clinical evidence on the use of acupuncture is its ability to **reduce chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting**. Other clinical studies demonstrate that acupuncture may be helpful for **cancer-specific pain, post-operative pain, anxiety and depression, night-sweats / hot-flashes, post-chemotherapy fatigue, neuropathy, radiation-induced xerostomia (aka - dry mouth), and possibly insomnia and quality of life**. ACI also states that animal and laboratory studies find that acupuncture “may help a person’s immune system work better.”

Most patients receiving acupuncture state that an added benefit is its ability to help **reduce stress** and bring about a greater state of **relaxation and well-being**. In addition, many people who incorporate acupuncture into their health care say they do so because it helps them feel like they are taking an active role in their own care. Research studies have found 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.

If you are interested in setting up an appointment or learning how acupuncture may be helpful during your personal journey, contact the Cancer Integrative Medicine Program at **312-563-2531** to learn more.

RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER CANCER INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE PROGRAM

Religion/Spirituality and Coping with Cancer

by Andrea Canada, PhD
Clinical Health Psychologist
Cancer Integrative Medicine Program

The diagnosis of cancer is often experienced as a life-altering, traumatic event. Treatments can be harsh and disruptive, and uncertainty about disease outcome/survival creates emotional distress. For many with cancer, religion/spirituality (R/S) plays a crucial role in navigating the illness experience.

In several research studies, patients reported that R/S was an important source of emotional support in dealing with cancer [1,2] and provided them with the ability to find meaning in everyday life [3]. Some patients claimed that R/S was not just “another” means of coping, but, rather, the single most important strategy in dealing with cancer-related distress [4-6]. Most cancer patients who use R/S to cope, do so, at least in part, because it provides a sense of hope.

Religion/Spirituality Benefits

Several studies have linked greater R/S coping or higher levels of spiritual well-being with lower levels of hopelessness [7-9]. This relationship is even stronger in the cancer palliative care setting, where R/S offered some protection against end-of-life despair [10]. Further research suggests that R/S is significantly associated with measures of adjustment and the management of disease-related symptoms. As examples, breast cancer patients with higher levels of R/S reported better physical well-being [11], improved quality of life [12], greater self-esteem and optimism [13], less anxiety [14], and higher life satisfaction [15]. It is thought that R/S resources may serve multiple functions in long-term adjustment to cancer including maintaining confidence, providing a sense of meaning or purpose, giving comfort, reducing emotional distress, increasing inner peace, and engendering a positive attitude toward life [16-19]. Spiritual well-being, particularly a sense of meaning and peace has been associated with an ability of cancer patients to continue to enjoy life despite high levels of pain or fatigue [20]. In fact, cancer survivors who utilized spiritual resources to cope with cancer reported substantial personal growth as a function of the illness experience [21].

Religion/Spirituality Struggle

As suggested above, many individuals find the consolation they seek in R/S during the cancer experience. However, there are some patients for whom illness may precipitate a brief, or prolonged, period of R/S struggle including feeling punished or abandoned by God [22]. A growing body of evidence indicates



that R/S struggle is associated with poorer outcomes in the oncology population [23-25]. For example, among 213 multiple myeloma patients, those with greater religious struggle had greater levels of general distress and depression and, to a lesser extent, higher indices of pain and fatigue, and more difficulties with daily physical functioning [26].

Suggestions

If you find that your R/S resources are serving you well during the cancer experience, by all means, continue along this path. If you are experiencing R/S struggle in response to the cancer experience, we recommend the following:

1. explore R/S concerns with an expert at the Rush Cancer Integrative Medicine Program;
2. seek assistance for R/S concerns from your own clergy;
3. request a referral to see a Rush chaplain;
4. find a religious or faith-based therapist; and/or
5. attend a support group known to address R/S issues.

For more information, please contact Andrea Canada, PhD at 312-563-2531