

Patient Advocate Perspectives on Integrative Oncology – Diet & Physical Exercise, Managing Unwanted Effects, Environmental Factors

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From the perspective of a person with cancer, there is NO separation between management of the unwanted (usually called 'side') effects and diet and physical exercise. Why is that? Because both appropriate nutrition and physical movement have been shown to be effective tools in reducing many of the negative short and long-term outcomes of conventional cancer treatments.

As advocates we think more emphasis is needed about simple steps any person with cancer can take to get healthier to better deal with conventional treatments. Is everyone seeing a nutritionist or exercise counselor? Why not? These services should be available at all cancer centers, and be known to all oncology professionals treating people. Additionally since so many with cancer face the risk of recurrence, counseling on nutrition and physical exercise would be of value there as well. We find simple ways to encourage people to move in healthier directions, and we find them very interested. Research is also needed that looks at combining a variety of healthy behaviors including the use of 'green' cleaning and personal care products, detoxifying the body from the continual assault of pollutants in our atmosphere and the use of some dietary supplements – some of which have been well-defined in individual studies, ie fish oil, probiotics, vit D, etc. We've heard arguments about the difficulty but remain unimpressed by that. Our mission is providing information for people with cancer, and we do it on a large-scale via our website, online since June 1999, reaching millions of English-speaking people.

Biography

Ann E. Fonfa was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 44 (1993). She became interested in a variety of issues that she though badly handled. Happily more than half of the list has been addressed. Comorbidities made her unable to take chemotherapy and explored alternative medicine. She founded Annie Appleseed Project educating others about what she found. She's Florida Field Coordinator for National Breast Cancer Coalition, Advocacy co-chair, Florida Breast Cancer Foundation, Chair, Risk Reduction Working Group, SFLCCC, author of one published paper, coauthor of many. Reviews for Cochrane and other organizations. Serves on many varied panels.