

What Do You Mean I Can't Take My Vitamins Anymore? A Qualitative Review of Nutritional Supplement Use During Cancer Treatment

Alina Barnett

UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, CA 94143, USA

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and over-the-counter (OTC) drug use among patients undergoing chemotherapy is increasingly prevalent with estimates reaching nearly fifty percent. Studies suggest that health care professionals rarely have complete medication lists on file for patients receiving chemotherapy. Concomitant OTC and CAM use during chemotherapy could potentially lead to severe drug interactions; a problem that is compounded when health care professionals are unaware of patient non-prescribed or alternative therapy use. The present study provides a literature review of both OTC and CAM use by patients undergoing chemotherapy as well as healthcare professional perception regarding patient OTC and CAM preferences. Non-disclosure of CAM and OTC use is postulated to occur for a variety of reasons: (1) a patient perception that healthcare professionals are displeased with alternate therapies, (2) misleading OTC packaging and (3) misunderstandings of the possible dangers that OTC and CAM products can cause regarding potentially severe interactions with chemotherapy. Understanding patient motivation to use CAM and OTC products during chemotherapy could improve open communication between patients and healthcare providers. Patient disclosure of OTC and CAM use to pertinent healthcare providers during clinic visits as well as more thorough documentation of all medications, would allow for an accurate medication list that may reduce potential drug interactions during chemotherapy.

Biography

Dr. Alina Barnett completed her Doctor of Pharmacy degree at Washington State University and is a Pediatric Clinical Pharmacist at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and an Assistant Clinical Professor at UCSF School of Pharmacy. Dr. Barnett's research interests lie in effective medication counseling in the adolescent oncology and transplant patient and innovative clinical pharmacy teaching techniques.