

Perspectives of Integrative Oncology

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Short Commentary

During cancer diagnosis, most patients only approach their surgeon who cut out tumors and oncologists who use potent chemotherapies and radiation to root out disease. But in this era when cancer cases are increasing, many experts are suggesting a more holistic, long-term approach that provides closer attention to the overall health of patients suffering from cancer [1]. That is why many practitioners are in favor of rapidly expanding the field of integrative oncology. Integrative Oncology fuses the best of conventional and alternative treatments [2].

The goal of integrative care is to help patients realize their overall health, e.g., strength, stamina, and emotional states, to achieve the highest quality of life while undergoing the latest evidence based therapies. Achieving this goal will entail integrative care delivered simultaneously by a collaborative team of physicians, surgeons, and other clinical specialists [3]. These may include acupuncture, mind-body medicine, naturopathic medicine, nutrition therapy, oncology rehabilitation, pain management and spiritual support [4]. Palliative care should endeavor to integrate with oncological care in a timely manner in order to holistically optimize patient care. Thus integrative approach will be brought to bear upon a wide range of symptoms exhibited by cancer patients, e.g., anxiety stress, body image, depression, digestive issues, dry mouth, eating difficulties, loss of appetite, fatigue, malnutrition, lymphedema, memory cognition, mucositis, nausea and vomiting, numbness, peripheral neuropathy, radiation burns, weight loss and taste/smell deficiencies [5]. Integrative oncology and its host of strategies, such as exercise, stress management and special nutritional care and targeted supplements can reduce inflammation and boost immunity [6]. This can promote the healing process and reduce the risk for recurrence [7].

The fundamental and multidisciplinary approach of integrative oncology, along with the influx of new knowledge in this pioneering field of cancer treatment, certainly will lead to new modalities and strategies for the prevention, treatment, and care of patients with various neoplasms. In doing so, the improvement of quality of life of the patients will be a major benefit [8].

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