

Acupuncture a Powerful Integrative Oncology Tool

Integrative Oncology is the combination of “mainstream” care and evidenced-based complimentary therapies to control cancer-related pain and symptoms [source: Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center Integrative Medicine]. Complementary therapies, while not given the attention that more traditional cancer therapies may receive, are perhaps equally important while undergoing treatment for certain types of cancer. Patients diagnosed with difficult to treat malignancies will often use these types of therapies in conjunction with traditional treatment options, which include surgery, chemotherapy, or radiology, to form a more comprehensive and effective treatment regimen. Among the most effective alternative therapies utilized by those diagnosed with cancer is acupuncture.

Acupuncture has long been utilized as a general pain reduction method for thousands of years, originating in the Far East and gradually being utilized throughout the world. Effective cancer treatment often depends on the patient’s ability to not only defeat the cancer through various methods but to also maintain their health and mental spirit throughout the course of treatment.

Often, the symptoms and effects of the cancer itself on the body are insignificant compared to the pain and other side effects of chemotherapy and radiation. Patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation are often fatigued, experience a lack of appetite and weight loss, and may become depressed. For cancer patients experiencing these and other side effects, acupuncture is extremely beneficial. According to the ancient theories of Chinese medicine, “qi,” or “life energy,” flows through energy channels within the body known as meridians. These channels connect the body’s internal organs, and if these meridians become “blocked,” or an individual’s qi cannot flow properly, disease will set in. Acupuncture is said to relieve blockages and restore the natural flow of qi, and ultimately restoring one’s health.

Cancers such as [pleural mesothelioma](#), which are often unable to be removed by surgical means, are often treated with some combination of chemotherapy and radiation [the combination of chemo drug Alimta® and anti-cancer drug Cisplatin® is a popular [mesothelioma treatment](#) method]. While these potent drugs can be effective in eliminating some of the tumor mass and growth, they also profoundly affect the health of the surrounding tissue. Symptoms experienced by those undergoing mainstream cancer treatments include fever, nausea, and debilitating pain.

Patients who undergo acupuncture in conjunction with mainstream cancer therapies have experienced dramatic reductions in pain and feel that their energy and mental wellbeing was restored. Cancer patients who feel energized, are pain-free and have a solid state of mind are more likely to withstand traditional methods of cancer treatment and have an increased survival rate.

Acupuncture is said to be so effective, in fact, that the World Health Organization [WHO] has recognized acupuncture as a successful intervention for adverse reactions to radiation and chemotherapy. The National Institute of Health [NIH] also agreed that acupuncture may relieve nausea and pain experienced by cancer sufferers, and the organization supports acupuncture clinical trials.

While this ancient method of therapy may be extremely effective for some, acupuncture may not be recommended for all cancer patients. Those who have a history of endocarditis, neutropenia or

thrombocytopenia should not undergo acupuncture. Individuals with lymphedema or those who have a pacemaker should speak with a physician before beginning any course of acupuncture therapy.

While oncologists like [Dr. Raphael Bueno](#) of the Cancer Center at Memorial Sloan-Kettering in New York City continue to work towards a cure, those who practice the ancient art of acupuncture will be working to help cancer sufferers experience a better quality of life and an increased rate of survival.

Jack Bleeker, Research Coordinator

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