

ONCOLOGY-BEYOND ALLOPATHY

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Author:	
Uma Garg Professor & Head, Department of ENT BPS Gov. Medical College for Women, Khanpur Kalan, Sonapat	

Cancer is a lifestyle disease & is synonymous with considerable morbidity & mortality. After suspicion a definitive diagnosis is established by pathological examination & staged by optimal radiological workup. Treatment modalities available are surgery, chemotherapy & radiotherapy. Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is the popular term used for health ad wellness therapies that have not typically been part of conventional allopathic or western medicine. Complementary medicines are used along with conventional medicines & by definition help in completing the process of healing. While Alternative medicines are used in place of conventional medicines or Mainstream or Western medicines. CAM focuses on the person as a whole and includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and in some aspects parallels AYUSH which is a combination of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. Allopathic practices and protocols are not without undesirable side effects and proponents of CAM claim fewer or almost nil side effects in addition to positive results.

Honestly if one comes to think of the source of these complementary and alternative medicines, these are derived or consist of some special diets, herbal products or organic concoctions which might be containing various chemotherapeutic agents used by Allopathy possibly in other form or different concentration and therefore prove beneficial many times. Vicristine & Vinblastine

are known plant extracts useful in many cancers. Different medicines are prescribed by Tibetan and Unani people for various ailments but often looked down with disdain by Allopathy despite some favorable reports.

Information about CAM not only flows freely in media but is frequently talked about. In U.S. Current activities are underway at NIH National Institute of Health and efforts are on to clear the air of uncertainties surrounding CAM. Truly speaking no modality for any disease is flawless and it is a matter of knowing in depth about the biological behavior of a special disease like cancer & the factors affecting its progress/regress. Reactively a new discipline of PSYCHO SOCIAL ONCOLOGY which emerged about 20 years ago and aims at identifying & managing the more subtle & subjective symptoms accompanying the definitive ones is hardly known to the clinicians dealing with such patients. There is a belief that there exists a mind & body nexus that in theory could be modulated to influence natural course of disease in the sense if the patient feels better it might indirectly help the patient to feel better. It should be understood that much research is required to investigate the psychosomatic aspects and spiritual dimensions requiring redressal. While Western or Conventional (reductionist) medicine is backed by evidence, CAM is based on certain beliefs & metaphors with some or more dubious practices which are not proven.

CAM can no longer be ignored by practitioners of EBM. Cancer is known to world since ages & therefore unmet needs of these patients if reflected & understood can be taken care of by favorably interacting CAM with Allopathy. Practitioners of EBM & believers of CAM should work consensually in good faith to improve QOL & survival. Validation of claims by CAM & Ayush too should not be refuted outright but collaborative research among different leaders in field of Oncology should be the

road map for the future to strengthen all the therapies available to be used scientifically in an integrated manner for best results.

Address for Correspondence

Dr. Uma Garg
Professor & Head, Deptt. of ENT
BPS Gov. Medical College for Women,
Khanpur Kalan, Sonapat
E-Mail : drumamkgarg_1962@yahoo.co.in
Mob. : 8607701336