Integrative and complementary therapies for patients with advanced cancer

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Abstract
In integrative medicine, well-being is emphasized, and in palliative care, quality of life (QOL) is a similar concept or goal. Both can occur despite advanced cancer. Integrative medicine serves to combine the best of alternative, complementary and conventional therapies to optimize well-being and QOL, whether or not a person is at the end of their life. When integrative medicine is combined with palliative care modalities, the toolbox to provide symptom control and well-being or QOL is increased or broadened. Palliative care and integrative medicine are best provided early in the trajectory of illness such as cancer, and increase in amount as the illness progresses toward end of life. In cancer care, symptoms of the cancer, as well as symptoms produced by cancer therapies, are addressed with conventional and integrative therapies. Goals of care change as the disease progresses, and a patient’s unique situation creates a different balance of integrative and conventional therapies. Integrative therapies such as music, aromatherapy, and massage might appeal to more patients than more specific, less common integrative therapies that might be more expensive, or seem more unusual such as Ayurvedic medicine and energy modalities. Each person may be drawn to different integrative modalities depending on factors such as cultural traditions, beliefs, lifestyle, internet information, advice from family and friends, books, etc. This review focuses on how integrative and complementary modalities can be included in comprehensive palliative care for patients with advanced malignancies. Nutrition and movement, often neglected in conventional treatment strategies, will also be included in the larger context of integrative and palliative modalities. Both conventional and integrative modalities in palliative care help patients live with empowerment, hope, and well-being no matter how long their lives last. A comprehensive review of all integrative and complementary therapies is impossible given the enormous diversity in this area. This review will concentrate on modalities such as nutrition, movement, music, aromatherapy, massage, select supplements, and acupuncture that have been researched in cancer survivors. Many of these modalities are quite effective for a number of symptoms in palliative care and have been studied in non-cancer populations. Resources for further study will also be included.
Some people with cancer may consider using complementary therapy in addition to standard cancer treatment. This approach is called integrative medicine when it has been discussed with and approved by your health care team. Many people use complementary therapies to:

- Reduce the side effects of cancer treatment
- Improve their physical and emotional well-being
- Improve their recovery

Professional nutrition counseling with a registered dietitian helps patients:

- Manage weight changes
- Learn which foods to eat during treatment and recovery
- Cope with nausea
- Learn about herbs and supplements that may interfere with cancer treatment
- Learn how to eat in a way that could lengthen their lives

Acupuncture. Integrative Cancer Therapies is a peer-reviewed medical journal focusing on complementary and alternative medicine in the care for and treatment of patients with cancer. Therapies like diets and lifestyle modifications, as well as experimental vaccines and chemotherapy are the subject of this journal. It was established in 2002 and is published by Sage Publications. The editor-in-chief is Keith I. Block (University of Illinois at Chicago).