

OBJECTIVES;

To present an overview of Mind-BodySpirit medicine including discussions of the efficacy of select self-care approaches.

DATA SOURCES;

Research and clinical articles on select complementary interventions. The model developed by the Center for Mind-Body Medicine.

CONCLUSION;

Good information, self-care skills, and a supportive environment can assist an individual to achieve a higher level of physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness while navigating the cancer experience.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE;

Increasing numbers of patients with cancer are becoming active in their health care and are choosing complementary approaches. There is an increasing body of literature supporting these interventions in improving quality of life. Nurses can acquire information to help patients navigate the expanding arena of complementary practices. "What Else Can I Do?" "What Else Can I Do?"

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MINDBODYSPIRIT MEDICINE

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INCREASING numbers of people living with a diagnosis of cancer have become active participants in their health care. This increase both arises from, and continues to foster, the burgeoning awareness and use of treatments that heal the MindBodySpirit. In the best situations, health care providers are both guides and collaborators on the journey of these patients.

Mind-body approaches (guided imagery, meditation, hypnosis, movement therapies such as dance, tai chi, chi gong, and yoga as well as music and chanting) are as old as Aboriginal healing systems and as widespread as Chinese, Indian, African, Latin American, and Native American medicine. Modern Western medicine, which has only begun to value these techniques in the past 30 years, now is beginning to give them the recognition and importance they have long held elsewhere.¹ Much of this recent attention has been spurred by patients themselves. The results of several national surveys^{2,3} indicated that the majority of people seek out complementary and alternative medicine professionals because they find these approaches to health care congruent with their own values, beliefs, and philosophical orientation toward health and life.

WHAT IS THE NEW MEDICINE?

The vocabulary of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) can be confusing to patients and clinicians. Some of the words used in the literature include holistic, humanistic, alternative, complementary, integrative, mind-body and simply, new. It is possible to understand this approach as resting on the following seven concepts.

1. Uniqueness

Integrative or holistic or new medicine is a philosophy of care, a model for understanding human health, and a therapeutic approach that acknowledges that we are biochemically, psychologically, and spiritually unique and that all care must be tailored to fit these individual differences and needs.

2. Holism

A holistic approach recognizes that our body, mind, emotions, and spirit are all interconnected and inseparable components of a whole person. Care is comprehensive in scope, and individualized, and involves multiple disciplines. Consideration is always given to nutrition, exercise, levels of emotional and physical well-being, unique stresses to be managed and the effects of the way we live and work, and the environment that surrounds us. There has to be time, in our early contacts with patients, to take a complete history. This history should include a history of family interactions as well as illness, social class, and ethnicity and their meaning to the patient; occupation and background of the patient's work life; nutrition, exercise and activity patterns; and the concerns they may have about doctors, nurses and their health care.

3. Healing Partnerships

Each individual needs to be an active partner in his or her care with health professionals committed to the individual's full participation in self-awareness and self-care. Respectful collaboration, not compliance is the watchword.

4. Self-Care

Self-care is the real "primary care." Among its many components are approaches that have generally been regarded as peripheral, but in fact are the heart of the new medicine. These include self-awareness, relaxation, autogenics and biofeedback, meditation, imagery, exercise, nutrition, and prayer. These components are tools for disease prevention and health maintenance, as well as an integral part of therapeutic intervention and symptom management. Once mastered, they increase the individual's sense of autonomy/control and enhance feelings of well-being.

5. Other Healing Systems

All of the traditional systems of healing, including Chinese medicine, Indian Ayurveda, Latin American Curanderismo, and so on, may be used with respect, intelligence, and discrimination. None is necessarily superior to the others. Presently, some systems (eg, Chinese medicine) have more scientific evidence to support them. Health care providers need to respect, learn, and collaborate with practitioners from these traditions to help guide patients' interest in, and choice of, these therapies.

TABLE 1.
Group Support Guidelines—The Center for Mind-Body Medicine

- Create a safe place
- Engage people actively in their own care
- Appreciate and enhance the meditative aspect of group experience—staying present in the moment
- Provide a variety of approaches and techniques of self-care they can learn to use
- Continue the work of the group at home
- Understand the cancer experience as a journey toward understanding and meaning—a spiritual journey

6. Group Support

Any illness can be depleting. The rush and pressure of modern life in this country often leads to isolation of people whose disease or treatment-induced fatigue limits them. A support group, consisting of others similarly challenged, offers the unique opportunity for feeling a sense of "community" with and acceptance from those who are living a similar cancer experience. A skilled leader can encourage strategies to cope with the new challenges that are part of the cancer journey. Group support is a universally applicable approach. The research on support groups is as good as that for many standard treatments. The availability of groups specifically designed for patients to share their experience and learn self-care has grown geometrically in the past 30 years. Table 1 identifies guidelines for group support developed by the Center for Mind Body and Medicine.

7. Illness as a Journey

Illness can be viewed as an existential crisis or turning point. It can challenge our beliefs about life, death, meaning, and our sense of mastery and potency in the world, the very foundation upon which we build our lives. How this challenge is met shapes the course of the illness, influences treatment outcome, and our future life.

CANCERGUIDES

The Center for Mind Body Medicine has developed a model for educating caregivers to become *CancerGuides*, individuals who are concerned with helping people with cancer and their families create individualized, comprehensive care, and supporting them through the cancer journey. During training, these individuals are exposed to evidence-based research in conventional

and complementary medicine and have the opportunity to work in small groups with patients and health care professionals to explore the experience of living with a diagnosis of cancer. For more information you can consult the Center's website www.cmbm.org or call (202) 966-7338, ext. 222. This program has evolved a number of core values for the *CancerGuide* which include:

1. Individualized treatment for each person.
2. A caring, healing partnership.
3. A focus on wholeness, on each person's attitude, and on helping them to create balance in their lives.
4. Enhancing self-awareness and self-care.
5. Skill building, which assists in the process of self-regulation and self-care, primarily through mind-body skills.
6. Offering informed guidance in discriminating among all treatment options.
7. Emphasizing the synthesis of various approaches from a number of therapeutic disciplines.
8. Creating a healing community for patients and professionals.
9. An approach that emphasizes personal transformation in the cancer experience.
10. Long-term focus on health promotion.

When a person is diagnosed with cancer, there is often an information overload. The *CancerGuide* is there for that one individual, navigating through all the complementary and alternative options, assisting in the choice of interventions, finding the providers and putting together a program of truly integrative, effective, and humane care. Then, when the patient is ready, they help them find out how they can help themselves to move forward on their healing journey.

SELF-CARE

MindBodySpirit Medicine is a crucial part of the cancer patient's answer to the question, "What else can I do?" Within this concept, there are many strategies to assist the patient in increasing self-awareness.

Journaling

Writing about stressful events in a journal can enhance well-being, reduce frequency of medical visits, and has positive implications for improvement in immune function,⁴⁵ as well as in psychological and behavioral improvement in patients

with cancer.⁶ Schwartz⁷ describes the benefits of journaling to achieve closure at the end of life.

In research studies on journaling, people are generally asked to write about traumatic events for 20 minutes or more on each of 3 successive days. For those with cancer, this process can be ongoing. It can include reactions to the diagnosis, treatment, other peoples' attitudes, fears of death, or anything else in the past or present that was or is troubling or challenging. Writing, which can be done at any time, helps the patient take charge and become active in one's own care.

Drawing

Expression through drawing or formal art therapy can be a healthy and helpful vehicle for emotional expression and for discerning concerns and fears that may not be easily available to our conscious mind.⁸ Art therapy is effective for children as well as adults.⁹ The materials involved are readily available at a minimum cost and involve little physical energy expenditure.

Music

Music and music therapy can help to improve one's mood,¹⁰ and can have a positive impact on quality of life.¹¹ Kwekkeboom¹² reports that music has a role in reducing procedural pain and anxiety. It can be used alone or in combination with meditation, imagery, or self-hypnosis.

Relaxation

Various forms of relaxation therapies have been found to benefit patients in diverse ways. Physiologically, relaxation is a reduction in the sympathetic nervous system excitation that marks the fight-or-flight response and lowers the level of stress. Herbert Benson, MD, who has been researching and teaching the "relaxation response" at Harvard Medical School since the 1960s, has focused on instructing patients to concentrate on their breathing or on a phrase, religious or secular, that is meaningful to them and ignore intrusive thoughts. Simply relaxing 15 or 20 minutes twice daily results in lowered levels of adrenaline and Cortisol, decreased blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration; enhanced immune functioning; and balanced activity in the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

Meditation

There is increasing literature on the positive benefits of meditation (a combination of relaxation

and self-awareness) in stress reduction.¹³⁻¹⁶ Many patients seek self-help books on mindfulness meditation or participate in classes in their community. For many, meditation becomes an attitude, a way of life, and a relaxed awareness of all that exists in our lives (thoughts, feelings, and sensations). Meditation is basically being fully in the moment, a striking contrast with "what ifs" (an anxiety about the future) or "I should have's" (an anxiety about the past) often experienced by people with cancer.

Imagery

"Imagery is a mind-body intervention that uses the power of the imagination to access physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions to effect change."¹⁷ Research has recently been conducted on the effects of hypnotic guided imagery on psychological well-being and immune function,¹⁸ as well as guided imagery's effects on comfort.¹⁹ To assist oncology nurses interested in learning this intervention, the Psychoneuroimmunology Special Interest Group of the Oncology Nursing Society recently published "Voice Massage: Scripts for Guided Imagery."²⁰

Exercise

Exercise is an essential component of a program of integrative care. It involves becoming active on our own behalf, and fully experiencing the body, with its strengths and limitations. Research has shown physical activity to have a beneficial impact on quality of life²¹⁻²³ of cancer patients, on self-esteem, depression, and anxiety,²⁴ and fatigue, level of physical functioning, and emotional distress.²⁵ The benefits of exercise can be measured at the cellular level where it enhances natural killer cell cytotoxic activity²⁶ and monocytes.²⁷

Prayer and Spirituality

Prayer and spirituality have an important role in the lives of many patients. An excellent article elsewhere in this issue discusses this modality. There is no question that spiritual practice and prayer can enhance general health. Studies related to the efficacy of intercessory prayer (by others for the patient) are currently being debated.

CANCER AS A TURNING POINT

Cancer is inevitably a turning point in one's life. The question is how to understand this turning point. The moment of change may be

abrupt, shattering the normalcy of an ordinary day with an unanticipated positive biopsy report, or it may be a more gradual recognition of something wrong. However it occurs, there will be a "before" and "after" the diagnosis of cancer.

It is not unusual for a person to feel disoriented, anxious and confused, or numb after receiving the diagnosis of cancer. Patients tell stories of thinking that they will soon be told it was all a mistake and it was someone else's test results. Others believe it must be a dream and they will wake up to find out they are well. Families often attempt to protect each other from the truth, causing a further sense of isolation and loneliness.

How patients are told the information can set the tone for their adaptation.²⁸ Caregivers must support a person's mind, heart, and spirit if the care of their body is to be completely effective. As one patient said, "Don't you worry about giving me false hope. Hope is what I do with the information you give me."

As patients prepare for their "firsts" (eg, chemotherapy, radiation, hair loss), a unique opportunity exists to teach mind-body skills that will increase their sense of personal power and self-mastery, and help manage side effects. Ritual has a role in defining transitions and moments that deserve to be honored. In addition to endings and beginnings, it defines triumphs and moments that have no words. For some, concrete symbols are helpful. One patient, a colleague, placed her get well cards and letters in a scrapbook. When she had a low energy day, she would position herself comfortably in a chair or in her bed and go through each page. As she looked at a card, she would feel the love and energy of the person who sent it. This healing ritual sustained her throughout her chemotherapy and radiation treatments and the book remains a cherished reminder.

Just as beginnings can cause anxiety, so can the end of treatment. Along with relief, there may be fear about withdrawal from the constant attention of the medical team. The task here is to learn to live with uncertainty and ambiguity.

Often, follow-up appointments will trigger a resurfacing rush of anxiety. The practice of self-care skills can protect the time around appointments from inundation by floods of fear. Ongoing support from *CancerGuides* can be invaluable.

CONCLUSION

Navigating the journey of cancer can be helped by good information and self-care skills. The *CancerGuide* is trained to play a

central, deeply supportive role at every stage of the way. And of course, other skilled professionals, supportive family and friends, and fellow travelers who understand the experience are also a blessing.

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