

# Integrating Evidence-Based Natural Medicine in Cancer Care

By Dr. Danny Jui, ND

Recent studies show that 69-88% of people diagnosed with cancer use one or more natural therapies in addition to conventional treatment. Despite this wide use, most people feel uncomfortable discussing natural therapies with their doctors. While medical oncologists are trained in standard conventional treatments, naturopathic physicians are trained in evidence-based natural medicine. It is important to work with a naturopathic doctor who is able to integrate the most relevant options and provide information on the appropriateness of these therapies in your situation.

## Natural does not mean safe.

The safety profile of any natural therapy being considered must be carefully examined by your naturopathic doctor. Potential negative interactions with conventional interventions may pose a threat to the outcome of your overall treatment. For example, certain natural substances may prolong bleeding time, an important



factor to avoid before any surgical procedure. Also, many herbs may alter how chemotherapeutic agents are processed in the body, leading to either too little toxicity to eliminate cancer cells or too much toxicity for the body to handle.

## Be informed by evidence.

There is an overwhelming amount of information available. Work with your naturopathic doctor to distin-

guish the helpful from the hype. Simplify your treatment regimen by selecting the most essential and effective therapies based on the best-available evidence. This objective approach takes advantage of existing data to help you and your physician determine the best options based on the outcomes of people in situations similar to yours.

## Be in touch with preference.

A person-centered approach respectfully explores comparable alternatives and your personal preference about your own care. This subjective approach honours the individual's autonomy which has been documented as one of the most intriguing and powerful characteristics of recovery and healing in many cancer survivors. It is therefore important to work with a team of health care professionals who value and foster this kind of humanistic environment in your care.

## Best of both worlds.

By combining the best of evidence-based practices and person-centered approach, natural medicine can be appropriately integrated into your existing care. Take it from a patient's insight: "Listen to your own inner feelings along with professional advice and research. Look for a consensus of opinions. That's how I make my decisions." 



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