CHAPTER 18

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for Brain Tumors

I’ve never thought of myself as a cancer victim. I live on a journey with cancer. Death comes to all of us, but until that time, I intend to focus on the quality of life, not the end of it. Some of my doctors told me that I was living with false hope. I said, “Well that’s fine, let me hang on to it.”

In October 2004, Cheryl will reach her seven-year benchmark since her diagnosis. When asked from where her wellspring of hope stems, she replies, It’s a choice. I’ve been depressed…it’s the pits. Fear and doubt create misery, and so can negativity. Since my diagnosis, I live with more hope and faith than ever.

Cheryl. Glioblastoma survivor.
IN THIS CHAPTER
COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM) FOR BRAIN TUMORS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CAM
What are the differences between complementary and alternative therapies?
What is the difference between CAM for cancer prevention vs. cancer therapy?
How might CAM benefit a person with a brain tumor?
Why is there so much discussion about CAM in the media?
Why doesn’t my regular doctor offer CAM?
What training do CAM practitioners have?
What are the major CAM approaches for cancer treatment and symptom reduction?
Can dietary supplements mean the difference between life and death?
What do herbs and other supplements cost?
What should a patient do with conflicting or no information about herbs and supplements?

SELECT CAM MEDICINAL THERAPIES USED BY CANCER PATIENTS
Dietary supplements that affect your chemotherapy
- Turmeric (curcumin)
- St. John’s Wort
- Beta-carotene
Plant products (botanicals), minerals for alternative tumor therapy
- Coenzyme Q10
- Copper chelating drugs
- Evening primrose (starflower or borage)
- Laetrile
- Melatonin
- Mistletoe (iscador)
- Mushrooms
- Red ginseng A and B
- Essiac tea
Natural Compounds for symptom relief
- Boswellia
- Bromelain
CHAPTER 18
Complementary Medicine (CAM)

- Echinacea
- Natural immune stimulants
- Yunnan Paiyao; blood platelet stimulants

Other Popular alternative therapies
- Antineoplaston therapy
- Cancell/Entelev/Protocel
- Coral calcium

ALTERNATIVE MEDICAL SYSTEMS
- Acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine
- Ayurvedic medicine

MANIPULATIVE AND BODY-BASED THERAPIES
- Yoga
- Massage
- Therapeutic touch
- Reiki

MIND-BODY THERAPIES
- Meditation
- Prayer and spiritual healing
- Hypnotherapy
- Education therapy
- Support groups
- Psychotherapy
- Relaxation training
- Aromatherapy
- Music therapy

Key search words
- CAM
- holistic
- oriental medicine
- Burzynski
- copper
- nutrition
- acupuncture
- meditation
- complementary
- ayurvedic
- herb
- mushroom extract
- chelation
- aromatherapy
- yoga
- mind body
- alternative
- TCM
- melatonin
- protocol
- laetrile
- massage
- psychotherapy
CAM is a general term for many types of therapy that are not part of the history and style of disease-based, Western medicine as practiced in North America for most of the last century. The major divisions of CAM, as expressed by the National Center for CAM (NCCAM), are illustrated in Table 18-1; there is often overlap among them. People with brain tumors often turn to these therapies when either conventional medication is no longer working or side effects have become unacceptable. Many of my patients who have had severe side effects from drugs have said, “There must be a better way to help me!” Yes, I agree.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**WHAT IS COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM)?**

More than sixty percent of people with brain tumors and other cancers use non-traditional medications and approaches to help them feel better or fight their cancer. Many credit CAM with saving their lives. However, there is a dark side. Although they are natural or organic, some CAM medications can be harmful. Knowing what they do and how they work will help you decide if a specific CAM is for you.

There is scant scientific evidence that CAM can cure brain tumors. However, it can definitely improve quality of life, reduce side effects, and possibly improve treatment efficacy. The effects of CAM are often subtle, however, and they may take weeks to show. Thus, waiting until symptoms are intolerable or advanced may not be the best approach. I have chosen to highlight selected therapies that are regularly discussed on the Internet and in support groups. Some Internet discussions are filled with misinformation; I will attempt to clarify this with facts.

Complementary and alternative care in the United States and elsewhere else is huge. Forty percent of Americans used CAM in 1997. They made more visits to providers of unconventional therapy than to their primary care physicians (629 million vs. 386 million visits). Its power can be estimated by its effect on our economy. Estimated expenditures in 1997 amounted to approximately $21.2 billion, two thirds of which ($12.2 billion) was paid out of pocket. These figures compare with $9.1 billion spent out of pocket annually for all hospitalizations in the United States and $29.3 billion spent annually on all US physician visits in the country.
What is the Difference Between Complementary and Alternative Therapy?

Complementary treatments intend to make you feel better and lessen uncomfortable symptoms like nausea (lemon or ginger, acupuncture); pain (capsaicin pepper extract or sugar); diarrhea (spearmint tea or rice water); or headaches (acupuncture). Some CAM therapies claim to boost the immune system, treat high blood pressure, or fight cancer. They are used along with more traditional therapies like surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy. People often take these treatments with or without their physician’s knowledge.

Alternative therapy used to mean cancer treatment, instead of conventional therapy. Such treatments include herbs like the maitake mushroom or boswellia; trace metals like selenium or chelated copper; raw or purified extracts from plants (laetrile-krebiozen), fish (shark cartilage), or urine (antineoplastons). Many people actually use these alternative treatments along with conventional therapies. Perhaps antineoplastons (see below) might qualify as a major alternative therapy for brain tumors.

Table 18-1 Major Areas of CAM Therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Therapies and applications</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Medical Systems</td>
<td>1. Homeopathic medicine (HM)</td>
<td>Minute doses of plant extracts, minerals, nutrition (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Naturopathic medicine (NM)</td>
<td>Counseling (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Ayurvedic medicine (AM)</td>
<td>Pharmacology (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Traditional Chinese medicine-(TCM)</td>
<td>Hydrotherapy, physical therapies (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Herbal medicine (2,3,4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Massage (3,4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acupuncture (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Movement (3,4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Biologically-Based Therapies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Same as above plus</th>
<th>Herbal remedies, plant preparations, (1)</th>
<th>Alleviate symptoms or control cancer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herbs</td>
<td>Vitamins, dietary supplements [shark cartilage, mushroom extract] (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional supplements</td>
<td>Macrobios (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special diets</td>
<td>antineoplastons (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural compounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Manipulative & Body-Based Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chiropractic</th>
<th>Touch, pressure (1,2,3,4)</th>
<th>Symptom relief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Osteopathic manipulations</td>
<td>Movement (4,5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Energy Therapies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reiki</th>
<th>Manipulate energy biofields within/ around body without direct contact (1,2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic Touch</td>
<td>Bio-electromagnetic therapies [electromagnetic fields of pulsed, alternating or direct current] (3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical devices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mind-Body Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art therapies</th>
<th>Enhance the mind’s capacity to affect bodily function and symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biofeedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypnotherapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual counseling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others practiced by healers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n) number refers to therapy types 1-4.

### What Is the Difference Between CAM for Cancer Prevention vs. Cancer Therapy?

There is often confusion between the uses of herbs, special diets, or *hands-on* approaches for treatment, as opposed to prevention. Symptom management, cancer prevention, and cancer treatment are often confused as a combined, single