

Breaking Down Barriers

The use of complementary cancer care to improve patient experience.

story / J. CHAPIN



From the moment of diagnosis, cancer patients are immediately faced with a world in which they have minimal to no experience. Starting with complex medical terminology and a range of treatment options, patients are emotionally strained to make decisions with limited time in which to make them. The impact of a cancer diagnosis affects the mind, body and spirit of a patient.

Symptoms and Studies

While there have been significant strides and successes in treating cancer, the symptoms and side effects often have an impact on patient quality of life. From pain and shoulder dysfunction with treatment for head and neck cancer to joint pain and stiffness in breast cancer patients, the side effects can be daunting. Patients enter the fight against cancer and win many battles to find themselves sometimes sidelined by the symptoms.

Studies have shown that acupuncture can help control a number of symptoms and side effects, such as: pain, fatigue, dry mouth, nausea, and vomiting. The National Cancer Institute states several of these studies and their respective effects of acupuncture and (i) improved immune system response, (ii) pain reduction, (iii) reduced nausea and vomiting, and (iv) symptom relief for weight loss, cough, chest pain, fever, anxiety, depression, night sweats, hot flashes, dry mouth, speech problems, and fluid in the arms or legs.

Patients and Protocols

So how does it all work? Trained and certified by Memorial-Sloan Kettering in Acupuncture for Cancer Patients, Joseph Williams, Acupuncture Physician, D.O.M. and founder of Sunshine Integrative Health offers his insight. "Integrative medicine is truly about treating the whole person so the first stage in

treatment is listening to the patients concerns and symptoms," states Williams.

Communication is a critical component of a patient centered practice, Williams continues. There is much to discover by actively listening to how patients feel, when they feel that way, what medications are they on, how do they feel on the medication, how long have they felt this way. For example, nausea is not as simple as an upset stomach. It can be caused by chemotherapy,

prescription medication, anxiety and a number of underlying causes. Improved outcomes for treatment are contingent on understanding the underlying source of a patient's symptoms.

An Acupuncture Physician trained in oncology care uses specific protocols for each of the following symptoms related to the treatment of cancer: pre and post surgery, nausea and vomiting, fatigue, pain, low blood counts, regulating digestion, dry mouth, neuropathy,

improved immune system function and more. "As an Acupuncture Physician trained in oncology care, we also know where to take the appropriate precautions," said Williams. "For example, you have to be incredibly careful taking any supplement during chemotherapy to insure there are no interactions."

From Diagnosis to Wellness

The goal line for each cancer patient is to move past the diagnosis. In doing so, wellness becomes a key priority for past patients, which is at the core of the integrative medicine model. Whether it is learning which foods work best to optimize your immune function, understanding homeopathy or a continued acupuncture treatment plan, integrative medicine provides a path to personal wellness.

Driven by his passion to integrate medicine with a specialized focus on integrative oncology, Williams has completed the advanced certification program from Memorial Sloan Kettering for 'Acupuncture for the Cancer Patient', is a member of the internationally recognized Society of Integrative Oncology, and has personally visited the University of Maryland's Center for Integrative Medicine and the Sari Asher Center for Integrative Cancer Care, an initiative of the Palm Beach Cancer Institute Foundation.

To reach Joseph Williams directly, please call 352-665-1090, located in the Seagle Building, 408 West University Avenue, Suite 503 or visit www.sunshineih.com. Sunshine Integrative Health is also a proud sponsor of the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer in North Central Florida. **GT**

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