

Thousands of people all over the world suffer daily from cancer. As technology improves, medical advances are made to prolong the life of cancer patients at all costs. Treatments such as chemotherapy and radiology have become increasingly accepted as the normal care for cancer. While technology concentrates on treating the cancer and remedying the scientific effects that it has on the human body, research on alternative medicine is finding ways and remedies to treat the patient. Often traditional doctors will prescribe any form of treatment to help eliminate the cancer at all costs, no matter what the side effect may be. Alternative medicine not only treats the cancer, but it helps the mind, body, and spirit of the person suffering from cancer.

An important element in the fight against cancer is an improved quality of life. An enhanced quality of life is being able to actively participate in everyday as well as out of the ordinary activities with minimal pain and suffering. Patients with a positive quality of life are much more able to successfully cope with the harsh realities that accompany cancer. Alternative therapies help to aide in enhancing the quality of life for cancer patients.

There are numerous alternative therapies available, some of which include: herbal medicines, acupuncture, and healing techniques using the power of the mind. The administration of these techniques will provide cancer patients with another choice as to how he or she wants to deal with the cancer. When coupled with daily doses of medication, alternative forms of healing offer an enhanced quality of life for patients suffering from cancer.

For patients suffering from cancer, it is almost impossible to live a productive life without the use of regular medication. Prescription drugs are often capable of causing more discomfort to the patient than actually doing them any good. Alternative healing through the administration of herbal medicine provides relief from some of the uncomfortable factors, such as nausea, that cancer patients have to deal with, as well as providing a boost to the immune system, while reducing the risk of side effects that would be caused by their pharmaceutical counterparts.

There are many known herbal medicines that remedy nausea, but ginger is known to be the most effective. The effective ingredients in ginger are found in the root or “rhizome”. A study was conducted in 32 women, experiencing severe nausea were “assigned to receive...250 mg of ginger...four times daily for four days” ([www.ahealthyme.com](http://www.ahealthyme.com)). As a result, “Twenty-eight of the 32 ginger treated patients had improvement in symptoms” ([www.ahealthyme.com](http://www.ahealthyme.com)). Nausea is a major struggle for cancer patients. The study shows that ginger is a safe and healthy alternative to over the counter medicines. The ability to relieve the cancer patient of the plague of nausea, even if it is just for a couple of hours, will drastically enhance the quality of life for those patients. Due to the natural properties of ginger, patients are more inclined to try it because it will not “pollute” the body like many other synthetic drugs. Natural medicine also gives the patient a feeling of beating the system by allowing them to reach outside the boundaries of traditional medical practices. The feeling of control helps boost the spirits and, as a result, improves the patient quality of life.

Herbal medicines such as garlic, ginseng, and Echinacea are also effective in boosting the immune system in cancer patients. Research shows that garlic “stimulates the body’s

immune system, boosting the killing ability of natural of natural killer cells and increasing microphage activity” (<http://ephnet1.niehs.nih.gov>). With a boosted immune system, the body is energized and better equipped to fight any infection or virus that the cancer may have acquired. Garlic has even been found to help fight the cancer itself. For example, female rats with mammary tumors were given dietary garlic and “found that dietary garlic administered in powder form caused significant delays in the onset of first mammary tumors and reduced the final number of tumors” (<http://ephnet1.niehs.nih.gov>). This is what all cancer patients hope and long for. By taking this alternative medicine, they are taking an active role in helping their bodies fight off cancer. This gives the patient hope, and according to David Simon, M.D., medical director from the Chopra Center for Well-being, “Hope is an essential aspect of life” (Simon, 240). Hope is one of the most important keys to enhancing the quality of life for someone who is suffering from cancer.

Ginseng not only helps boost the immune system, but also more importantly is responsible for reducing stress and treating depression. Ginseng works by strengthening “the hormonal system...and...regulating hormone levels and other biological functions” (Hobbs, 25). It is only natural that patients dealing with cancer are prone to high levels of stress. Their stressed state often leads to depression (Simon, 32). Through the use of ginseng the patient gains a renewed spirit and the ability to function without stress. “Ginseng has long been a popular remedy in Eastern medicine; ... and is used as a mood enhancer, stress reducer, and aphrodisiac” (<http://ephnet1.niehs.nih.gov>). Ginseng is a healthy and safe way for cancer patients to get a little boost from nature to make the process of healing a little easier.

Echinacea is another immune system booster. Echinacea is an herbal supplement “designed to bolster our natural defenses against infectious agents, as well as cancer” (Carper, 108). With a boosted immune system, most cancer patients are better equipped to deal with onsets of other medical complications. This gives most patients confidence, which aides in enhancing his or her quality of life.

The use of natural herbal remedies in safe doses is a pure and healthy way for cancer patients to help his or herself improve their quality of life. Herbal medicines do not contain the negative associations that often accompany prescriptions drugs. This reduces anxiety and effectively enhances the quality of life for cancer patients.

Another alternative form of healing is acupuncture, which helps to relieve the “all-consuming” (Siegel, 174) chronic pain that often causes the migraine headaches that cancer patients usually experience, therefore enhancing the quality of life. Although acupuncture has not been proven to directly fight cancer, this form of alternative healing is an effective technique to remedy side affects that the cancer will cause.

During the acupuncture treatment, needles are stuck in specific parts of the body in order to “stimulate the flow of healing energy” (Stewart, 89). Modern acupuncture is a slightly modified form of the ancient Chinese medicine practices that have been administered for centuries in China and other eastern countries. “ The ancient Chinese believed that the body has various channels, through which Ch’i flows” (Stewart, 88). Ch’i is the “energy flow” which the body uses to heal itself. The human body has been carefully mapped out, and a trained doctor can easily locate the spots for pain and headaches. Many people become anxious at the thought of the needles, but according to a doctor in Chicago, “I’ve never had anyone complain of pain or discomfort from

acupuncture treatment” (Stewart, 93). Acupuncture is an appropriate alternative remedy for cancer patients, because it does not inject any chemicals into the body that could cause a negative reaction.

When having the acupuncture treatment, the patient will experience “a tingling feeling, usually followed by relief from any pain they had been suffering” (Stewart, 92). The ability to become relieved of the pain without the possible side effects from prescription drugs is a miracle in itself for patients suffering from cancer. Acupuncture does not treat the cancer, it treats symptoms related to and caused by the cancer eliminating or even lessening the pain. This ultimately enhances the quality of life for the patients. Even though acupuncture is still undergoing extensive studies, it has been proven in one article that “of 24 studies found that the typical clinical trial showed a 70 percent efficacy” (Murray, 89). This highly effective treatment provides a safe way for cancer patients to rid their bodies of the pain that plagues them. Due to the pain reduction, cancer patients are able to live a healthier life. As a result, most patients are able to engage in the simple every day activities free of pain and pain-related anxiety.

Acupuncture is an effective alternative source of healing for patients suffering from cancer because it offers a painless procedure for getting rid of chronic pain and migraine headaches. It does this without the administration of potentially harmful medication, therefore reducing the risk of side effects. Due to this fact the patient is able to undergo treatment with minimal stress. This stimulates a positive attitude and allows for a greatly enhanced quality of life.

The mind is a very powerful tool when dealing with the healing process. Often, patients suffering from cancer will unconsciously let their mind lapse into a negative

mode, which deters the healing process, therefore taking away from their quality of life. The ability to condition the mind to maintain a positive outlook while strengthening its ability to control the body not only enhances the quality of life for cancer patients, but enables them to live longer. Conditioning the mind through support groups, self-hypnosis, and biofeedback will drastically improve the patient's outlook on their disease that in effect will enhance their quality of life.

Support groups allow cancer patients to condition their mind by finding their own reason for living through listening, sharing, and interacting with people in their same condition. For example, doctor David Spiegel, M.D. conducted an experiment in which eighty-six women suffering from breast cancer were randomly separated into two groups. Each group received the same traditional medical care prescribed for cancer patients, i.e. radiation, chemotherapy, and medication, although the second group met religiously once a week in a support session (Moyers, 68). The data concluded that the women who attended the support groups, "reported less depression, anxiety, and pain than those in the other group" (Moyers, 68). Support groups condition the mind by allowing the patients to release any negative energy, which would otherwise be detrimental to the healing process. Support groups teach the patients how to clear their minds and focus their energy on finding their motivation for living. This, in effect, improves their quality of life. In addition, Spiegel's study showed that "those who took part in the group psychotherapy had lived twice as long...as the group that received only standard medical care" (Moyers, 68). Support groups condition the mind to accept the condition of the patient, allow the patient to express their feelings, and encourage the patient to rely on others for guidance. Support groups permit patients to practice communicating their thoughts and feelings

with a conditioned mind. The group leaders, as well as the other patients, are the coaches who provide instruction and encouragement. After regularly attending support groups, the mind of cancer patients is like a well trained soldier, fully prepared to fight in a battle for life. With a clear, able mind and a renewed spirit, patients are better equipped handle the bends in the road to recovery.

In addition to support groups, the skill of self-hypnosis enables the cancer patient to focus his or her mind on something other than the disease in order to reduce the feeling of pain that accompanies cancer. For example, to get rid of pain, the patient focuses on something else, removing the sensation of pain from their thoughts and therefore out of their feeling. Dr. Spiegel also tested self-hypnosis in a controlled environment using patients with breast cancer. The results conclude “over the initial year, women in the control group sample reported that their pain had doubled- from two to four on a ten point scale. But the group that was trained in self-hypnosis reported a slight decrease in pain, so that by the end of the year their average pain ratings were less than two” (Moyers, 159). By conditioning the mind to relieve the body of pain, self-hypnosis directly enhances the quality of life for the patient dealing with cancer. Dr. Spiegel further concludes that one has to “pay attention to pain for it to hurt. You can lessen the pain by...turning up the attention you pay to other signals in your body or other thoughts or images” (Moyers, 159). Self-hypnosis gives the patient an active role in the healing process, which makes them feel like they are doing something productive to help themselves instead of waiting for help for other sources. This provides the patient with a feeling of accomplishment and self-worth that brightens their attitude and improves their quality of life.

Furthermore, conditioning the mind through biofeedback enables the patient to take control of a situation that is otherwise out of their control. When a person is faced with the reality that they have to live with cancer for what might become the rest of their life, it is easy to lose hope, because one thinks that the situation is completely out of their control. "Biofeedback directs or manipulates physiological responses which we normally allow to proceed at their own pace" (Rosenfield, 263). With biofeedback, the mind can be trained to control how the body reacts to certain situations. For example, if the cancer patient is suffering from nausea due to a medication, he or she can be trained to concentrate on the nausea, then eliminate it from his or her body. This enables the patients to get relief and resume a feeling of normality. The difference between self-hypnosis and biofeedback is that during biofeedback the patient is making a conscious effort to rid the body of the ailment, rather than focusing on something outside the body. Biofeedback gives the patient a greater feeling of control because the patient recognizes what is making him or her uncomfortable, and then conquering it through the power of the conditioned mind. Biofeedback is a healing technique designed so that "your wish is your brain's command" (Rosenfield, 263). The feeling of control adds to their quality of life while empowering the cancer patients to continue living.

Conditioning the mind clearly enhances the quality of life for the cancer patients. Actively participating in the conditioning process gives the patients satisfaction and motivation for further improvement. Involvement in the healing process keeps their mind off the cancer and on a more positive outlook. Releasing the negative energy and harnessing the positive energy is the key to enhancing the quality of life for patients suffering from cancer.

As technology continues to produce greater advancements in the treatment of cancer, alternative therapies will continue to provide the patient the care he or she needs to maintain an enhanced quality of life. Even though many of these techniques have been around for centuries, they are just recently becoming widely accepted. With an improved quality of life, most cancer patients are able to face their difficulties with a positive and renewed spirit. It is unclear to the world whether a cure for cancer will ever be discovered, but one thing is for sure, as long as people are able to grow natural herbs, and use the healing powers of the mind, cancer patients will have the opportunities of living a life of enhanced quality.

## Outline

Thesis: When coupled with daily doses of medication, alternative forms of healing offer an enhanced quality of life for patients suffering from cancer.

- I. For patients suffering from cancer, it is almost impossible to live a productive life without the use of regular medication.
  - A. There are many herbal medicines that remedy nausea, but ginger is known as the most effective.
  - B. Herbal medicines such as garlic, ginseng, and Echinacea are also effective in boosting the immune system in cancer patients.
    1. Garlic
    2. Ginseng
    3. Echinacea
- II. Another alternative form of healing is acupuncture, which helps to relieve “all consuming” (Siegel, 174) chronic pain that often causes migraine headaches; an ailment that cancer patients often suffer from, therefore enhancing his or her quality of life.
  - A. An explanation of the process of acupuncture
  - B. An explanation of what the patient goes through when undergoing acupuncture
- III. The mind is another very important tool when dealing with the healing process.
  - A. Support groups
  - B. Self- hypnosis
  - C. Biofeedback

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Alternative Therapies For Cancer Patients

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