

CHINESE MEDICINE IN SUPPORT OF CANCER TREATMENT AND THERAPIES

The fundamental purpose of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is to balance and normalize the flow of Qi and Blood throughout the body. (Think of Qi as energy, or moving force in the body that helps circulate blood). Whenever there is human disease of any kind, there has been a slow down, or interruption, of the flow of Qi and Blood. According to Isaac Cohen in “Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Treatment of Breast Cancer.”

“The current trend in China is to integrate, or combine, Western Therapies with TCM in the treatment of Breast Cancer. There are no available statistics on the proportion of women using this approach. Our collaborators in China estimate that about 70%-80% of women diagnosed with breast cancer in the metropolitan areas where Western medicine is favored, are using the combined approach at some point during their treatment of breast cancer while a very small fraction of women use TCM as a sole therapy. The treatments employed by the TCM physicians are aimed at controlling side effects and toxicities attributed to cancer therapies, improving quality of life, preventing recurrence, and prolonging survival.”

SURGERY

TCM is useful prior to surgery to strengthen the immune system and the internal organs. It is also used to control and relieve post-operative pain, help relieve swelling and accelerate the healing of tissue. It can be used to reduce or prevent constipation due to pain relieving medications. It can accelerate the restoration of energy and vitality.

CHEMOTHERAPY

Chemotherapy damages the energy of the digestive system (Spleen and Stomach) leading to nausea and a weakened immune system. Acupuncture treatment for chemotherapy side effects commonly includes the use of several points on the body to harmonize the flow of energy, calm nausea, and strengthen the immune system. Chinese Herbal Medicine can also be an effective means for managing the side effects of chemotherapy treatment. Herbs are often prepared to be taken as teas, raw extracts, powdered granules or pill and capsule forms for ingestion.

RADIATION THERAPY

Radiation therapy is a highly effective way to destroy cancer cells. The radiation damages cells that are in the path of its beam. This includes both cancer cells and normal cells. However cancer cells tend to grow and reproduce rapidly which makes them more vulnerable to radiation damage. They are also less able to repair themselves than healthy, normal cells. The primary side effect of radiation therapy is heat build up in the targeted area. This deep tissue heat causes significant burning, scabbing and scaring of the targeted tissue. Acupuncture and Chinese herbs are very effective in removing this heat before it rises to the surface and causes tissue damage. In addition to damaging the cancer cells, radiation produces oxidizing compounds that further destroy cancer cells. For this reason, radiation oncologists do not want patients taking antioxidants during radiation therapy because they would interfere with the action of the oxidizing compounds. In China, many research studies have been performed using radiation therapy alone and radiation therapy in conjunction with TCM, which includes both acupuncture and herbal therapies. The conclusion of these studies has been to show that the combination of radiation and TCM improves the anti-cancer effects of the radiation. At the same time, it helps prevent the radiation side effects and improves the body's overall health and well being.