

Better than the...



Do cancer alternatives really work?

DIET THE THEORY:

Scientific evidence does not support the notion that any particular food can cure cancer ~~but there are a growing number of believers in the preventative power of a carefully chosen diet, as well as those who believe some can aid treatment and recovery.~~

~~For example, avocados are a rich source of antioxidants that attack free radicals in the body; beetroot has been shown to kill cancer cells and fight blood related cancers; and tomatoes are rich in lycopene, which is also believed to fight damaging free radicals.~~

Whether a compound is an antioxidant is irrelevant to whether it has any role to play in treating the disease. There is no good evidence that any specific food or nutrient improves survival after a diagnosis of cancer. It is also possible that the oxidative stress caused by free radicals is an important mechanism for killing cancer cells.

~~Preliminary scientific studies at the Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre in New York suggest that garlic prevents breast and prostate cells from dividing, thus limiting tumour growth.~~

Preliminary studies on possible preventive agents have no relevance to treatments.

OUR EXPERT [WHO ISN'T AN ONCOLOGIST AND IS NOT MEDICALLY TRAINED] SAYS:

“Having a balanced and sensible approach to your diet will make a profound difference to your body’s ability to prevent cancer.”

ONCOLOGISTS AND MEDICALLY TRAINED RESEARCHERS SAY:

“Diet in general has some effect on cancer risk. This does not mean that a sensible diet is a treatment for cancer. Prevention and treatment of cancer are not related. Fruits and vegetables don’t treat cancer.”

~~Hippocrates said ‘let food be your medicine’. “Some simple guidelines would be to avoid processed foods and eat fresh fruit and veg where possible.~~

~~Vegetables are packed with so many cancer fighting nutrients that you should include as varied a mix as possible in your diet. Buy fresh to maximise their nutritional value.~~

The few trials of specific micro-nutrients that have been carried out, were unsuccessful (e.g. beta-carotene and lung cancer).

~~Also, treat sugar as a delicacy. We all get cancer a number of times in our lives but normally the immune system handles it while it is still microscopic.~~

~~However cancer cells have a lot of insulin receptors — insulin is our blood sugar regulating hormone so if we eat a lot of~~

~~sugary treats we are in essence feeding any cancer cells.~~

All our cells, cancerous or not, use sugar for energy which is obtained from all sorts of food, including fruit and vegetables.

Some people are advised to have a high-calorie diet during chemotherapy to help them cope with the effects of treatment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRESS THE THEORY:

~~Stress is a factor in cancer. The hormone cortisol (our stress hormone) modulates the immune response of our bodies and cancer is essentially a disease of immune deficiency.~~

~~This has been scientifically substantiated.~~

There is no evidence that stress is related to cancer risk. Cancer is not simply a disease of immune deficiency. It is an extremely complex disease with a combination of causes. A suppressed immune response (e.g. transplant patients on drugs to reduce their immune reactions) is associated with a slight increase in the risk of some cancer types, but this does not mean that the effect of stress on cortisol is relevant.

Stressful events can alter the levels of hormones in the body and affect the immune system. But there is no evidence that these changes could lead to cancer.

OUR EXPERT [WHO ISN'T AN ONCOLOGIST AND IS NOT MEDICALLY TRAINED] SAYS:

“People can get very wrapped up in the physical perspective of treating cancer using only surgery or chemo but the impact of stress should also be considered.

Unfortunately medicine doesn't consider stress as a factor in cancer, which is why a lot of people look to complementary approaches to reduce stress and support healing.”

ONCOLOGISTS AND MEDICALLY TRAINED RESEARCHERS SAY:

“There is no evidence to link reduced stress to increased healing. One study even found that high stress levels can reduce the risk of breast cancer, by lowering oestrogen levels.”

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES THE THEORY:

~~Therapies such as massage, hypnotherapy and reflexology can be beneficial in supporting cancer sufferers.~~

Unless specially trained, cancer is a contraindication to massage.

OUR EXPERT [WHO ISN'T AN ONCOLOGIST AND IS NOT MEDICALLY TRAINED] SAYS:

“Don't just rely on conventional medicine. Complementary treatments can assist the body's healing mechanisms.”

A study in 2008 showed such treatments used following a diagnosis of cancer are ‘useful, nontoxic and provide positive benefits that can improve prognosis.’

Complementary health helps bring the sufferer back to the centre of care, giving them back some control and input over their lives and bodies.”

ONCOLOGISTS AND MEDICALLY TRAINED RESEARCHERS SAY:

“None of these things have been shown to influence prognosis in randomised trials.”

GERSON TREATMENT

~~THE THEORY: This controversial regime is an alternative treatment, involving 13 juices a day, coffee enemas and vitamin jabs. It works on the principle of detoxifying the liver, believing cancer is a symptom of a diseased body in which tumours form when the liver and other organs are out of balance.~~

There is no evidence that Gerson treatment can treat cancer. It can cause serious side effects including serious infections, dehydration, constipation, colitis (inflammation of the colon), and dangerous electrolyte imbalances or even death.

Damage to DNA inside cells is what causes cancer not “toxins” in the liver and any suggestion that removing toxins can cure cancer is unfounded.

OUR EXPERT [WHO ISN'T AN ONCOLOGIST AND IS NOT MEDICALLY TRAINED] SAYS: “I was on a 21st-century version of Gerson called Plaskett Therapy. It is a very hard regime to follow and is controversial because it is alternative, not complementary. Success is difficult to quantify as many people turn to Gerson as a last resort.”

ONCOLOGISTS AND MEDICALLY TRAINED RESEARCHERS SAY: “Just because people turn to these things as a last resort does not make them difficult to quantify. Many novel therapies are initially evaluated in patients with end-stage disease.”

HOMEOPATHY THE THEORY:
~~A natural system for the treatment of disease by highly dilute doses of~~

~~substances.~~

~~It works by treating like with like.~~

ONCOLOGISTS AND MEDICALLY TRAINED RESEARCHERS SAY:
“Homeopathy does not work.”

OUR EXPERT [WHO ISN'T AN ONCOLOGIST AND IS NOT MEDICALLY TRAINED] SAYS: “This is often disregarded because it works in a different way to conventional medicine. It looks past the symptoms to consider the whole person.”

ONCOLOGISTS AND MEDICALLY TRAINED RESEARCHERS SAY:
“Homeopathy is disregarded because it does not treat the whole person or any part of the person.”

The information in this article comes from Cancer Research UK, the Institute of Cancer Research, oncologists and experts including: Professor Edzard Ernst, Professor Paul Pharoah.