

cancer alternatives.

“You have cancer” are the most frightening words a person can hear. What to do first? Which therapies work? **Louise O'Connor** charts a course through the confusion.

Cancer is a devastating disease that now touches the lives of thousands, either personally or through a relative or friend. After the initial shock of a cancer diagnosis most people will do everything they can to fight the disease, manage its symptoms and cope with the side effects of treatment. Many turn to natural alternatives for support. Unfortunately there is still a wide divide between the world of conventional cancer treatment and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

Complementary medicine, as it is referred to, is the use of CAM together with conventional medicine. Individuals with cancer choose complementary medicine to address both physical and psychological issues. A holistic approach can address a range of issues that encompass mind, body and spirit. Evidence of safety and effectiveness of complementary medicine is growing and a variety of practices are widely used to assist symptoms like pain, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and weight loss. For psychological issues complementary medicine offers an avenue for dealing with anxiety, depression, stress, and fear.

Why does it happen?

All cancers begin in cells, which are the body's basic unit of life. Cancer occurs when a certain type of cell out of the many different types of cells in the body - such as blood cells, pancreas cells, brain cells or liver cells - decides to grow in an uncontrolled way, in an excessive way, and at the expense of all the other types of cells in the body.

Our immune response is closely connected to feelings of wellbeing. The body is easily stressed by poor nutrition, toxins, emotional stress, and dehydration. This sets up an environment where cancer cells can thrive. Cancer cells are, unfortunately, everything we would like healthy cells to be: they quickly adapt to toxic environments and readily alter themselves to assure their continued survival. These factors make cancer an extremely difficult disease to treat.

Regaining peace

The Quest for Life Foundation was established in 1989 by Petrea King, to advance her work with people living with cancer. Since her own recovery from leukaemia in 1984, King and her team of health professionals have conducted programs for more than 80,000 people. She believes focusing on the physical aspects of healing addresses only part of the problem of cancer. Real health is our capacity to embrace every moment, regardless of its challenges, with an open heart and a quiet mind. This definition of peace is embodied in the 'four Cs':

- We regain a sense of **control** over our lives, choosing not to react from our history but making an appropriate response to the situation in which we find ourselves. This requires awareness and a desire to participate rather than feeling like a helpless victim of our circumstances.
- We care enough to be **committed** to getting emotionally up to date with our life so that we can be here now, in the present moment. We have healthy priorities; we nourish, rest, exercise and

FLOWER POWER

Research from America's Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, published in the *FASEB Journal*, suggests that the herb feverfew - best known for its role in helping to prevent and treat migraines - may also have potential in treating breast cancer. At present, a significant number of women with breast cancer prove to be resistant to tamoxifen, which is the most common drug used to combat the disease. However tests using parthenolide, which is an active ingredient of feverfew, show that it inhibits the protein complex nuclear factor kappa B (NF- κ B) which interferes with the drug's efficacy.



LOVE YOUR LIGNANS

An *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study says that a high dietary intake of lignans – which are plant oestrogens found in plant-based foods, especially seeds (e.g. flaxseed and sesame), legumes, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains – is associated with a 12-16 percent reduction in the risk of breast cancer in postmenopausal women.



‘fluff up’ our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves. We are in clear communion with ourselves and also have the capacity to communicate effectively with our loved ones.

- We find our life positively **challenging**, recognising that we are here to grow in wisdom and our capacity to love and that we can make meaning of our suffering.
- We feel lovingly **connected** to the important people in our life and also to our own spiritual essence; plus, we have a profound sense of connectedness to nature, our community, our friends, family or the Divine.

It is every person's right to be informed about alternative treatment options, and not to be confused by technical jargon.

The Annie Appleseed project

Ann Fonfa was diagnosed with breast cancer at age 44. “I suffered then and still do from chemical sensitivity,” she says. “I

used to become ill from smelling printed materials, fragrances, wet paint and medications, so when I was told to start chemotherapy, I said no can do.”

That one decision was the beginning of what is now The Annie Appleseed Project. “Much like the typical visitor

to our website I began searching and seeking for information on what was then called alternative medicine to get myself well. I found a lot of information and kept a file on my education and introduction to the wellness world. That file turned into paper handouts and the paper handouts grew into our website.”

The Annie Appleseed Project now has 90,000 visitors a month seeking information on natural therapies, lifestyle issues, and complementary treatments from a patient perspective. As patient advocates, the Annie Appleseed

LATEST CANCER RESOURCES

Annie Appleseed Project

www.annieappleseedproject.org

This is an educational website. Ann Fonfa, founder of The Annie Appleseed Project and a breast cancer survivor is on a mission to “plant seeds of information” that may offer hope to people with cancer.

Breast Cancer Action

www.bcaction.org

Carries the voices of people affected by breast cancer to inspire and compel the changes necessary to end the breast cancer epidemic. Their plan goes beyond the notion of finding a ‘cure’ but rather addressing emerging issues, such as the environmental impact on breast cancer development.

Cancer Decisions

www.cancerdecisions.com

Ralph W. Moss, PhD is an independent journalistic researcher who has been investigating and writing about promising cancer treatments since 1974. The Moss Reports provide detailed, yet readable information about specific cancers and treatment choices.

Environmental Working Group (EWG)

www.ewg.org

The EWG believes exposure to a wide array of toxic contaminants has become a major public health issue. This website provides information on reducing your exposure and provides useful resources such as the Skin Deep Cosmetic Safety Database.

International Strategic Cancer Alliance (ISCA)

<http://www.is-canceralliance.com/>

The International Strategic Cancer Alliance (ISCA) was formed in 2007 to help unite patients with oncologists and other specialists to integrate a vast array of synergistic therapies into customised treatment programs. The ISCA is currently focused on assisting newly diagnosed individuals with prostate or breast cancer.

Living Valley Springs

www.lvs.com.au

This offers a unique Australian health retreat experience in the lush green hinterland of the Sunshine Coast. The

renowned Ten Day Cleanse Program is medically designed to restore vitality and enhance emotional and physical wellbeing. The practitioners are specialists in their fields and have the knowledge to bring about optimum healing. Many guests report a visit to Living Valley Springs is life-changing.

Mayo Clinic

www.mayoclinic.com

Provides useful and up-to-date information and tools from doctors and scientists from the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center. The clinic is committed to translating knowledge gained from cancer research into effective improvements in patient care.

National Cancer Institute

<http://www.cancer.gov/>

The Institute's main responsibilities include coordinating cancer-related research, training physicians and scientists, and disseminating information about cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment and prevention. The research programs are extensive and contain many innovative initiatives.



SWEET AND SOUR

Does sugar feed cancer? The International Agency for Research on Cancer estimates that a staggering 25 percent of cancer cases worldwide are due to individuals simply being overweight and inactive. Being overweight is associated with elevated levels of insulin and other hormones which act as growth factors to increase risk. If you want to have a healthy cancer-free body it is important to eat nutrient-dense whole foods and perform regular physical activity to help maintain a healthy body weight. A healthy diet also provides a vast number of protective phytonutrients to safeguard against cancer. These include antioxidants (vitamins A, C, E and beta carotene), selenium, D3, zinc, folate, fibre and omega 3 oils. It is particularly important to cut back on sugar. Sugar is the main energy source of cancer cells. In fact, cancer cells use up to 20 times more sugar than healthy cells.

Project does not practise any type of therapy nor do they promote any specific treatments. Fonfa says, "We strongly suggest that individuals take charge of their lives through education and improve their health by implementing diet and lifestyle choices to support the cancer treatment they choose."

One common misconception is that complementary medicine is not 'scientific', so the Annie Appleseed Project provides evidence-based information where possible. Fonfa believes that it is every person's right to be informed about treatment options. Studies have consistently shown that the majority of patients are interested in or currently using complementary medicine strategies. People can often feel cautious discussing complementary medicine with their doctor, who they fear will not approve of their choices. However, a lack of disclosure can give rise to problems like drug interactions. Open and frank communication between the patient and doctor provides the opportunity for patients to express their personal

preference for complementary treatment options in a balanced and respectful way. Alternative treatments often offer something every person who is touched by this disease needs desperately: hope, which is a very powerful medicine.

Karin Knoester, CEO of The Gawler Foundation, says, "An integrative framework for cancer care, and indeed health care in general, provides a model of care that is lifestyle orientated and also supports a whole-of-life approach to healing. At The Gawler Foundation, we see this approach in action every day. Combining mainstream and complementary approaches to health provides many people with cancer with the best possible outcome as well as an improved quality of life."



LOUISE O'CONNOR is a leading Australian naturopath who has been a regular feature writer for *Nature & Health* for over four years. Louise swears by a fresh organic diet and yoga to keep her healthy. Visit her at www.natural-weightloss-programs.com.

Our Stolen Future

www.ourstolenfuture.org

A scientific detective story that explores the emerging threat of endocrine disruption. This website provides cutting-edge science to demonstrate the link between environmental contaminants and increased cancer risk.

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)

<http://nccam.nih.gov/>

This conducts and supports research, trains researchers, and provides information about complementary medicine.

Silent Spring Institute

<http://www.silent.spring.org/>

A collaboration of health activists who are committed to identifying and breaking the links between the environment and women's health, especially breast cancer. Named for Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring*, which launched the modern environmental movement.

The Gawler Foundation

www.gawler.org

Provides a range of internationally renowned healing programs that embrace an integrated approach to health, healing and wellbeing that includes the body, emotions, mind and spirit. The Life and Living program is a 10 day transformative program to meet and help overcome the challenges of cancer. This healing retreat is held every month at the Yarra Valley Living Centre, Victoria.

The Gerson Institute

www.gerson.org

Dedicated to providing education and training on alternative non-toxic treatment of serious disease. Developed by Dr Max Gerson in the 1920s, this therapy advocates organic foods, juicing, coffee enemas, detoxification and natural supplements to activate the body's ability to heal itself. There are currently two Gerson treatment centres in Mexico and in Hungary.

The Quest for Life Foundation

www.questforlife.com.au

Runs programs that focus on meditation, diet and counselling to create an environment for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing. The residential programs are conducted in the beautiful Southern Highlands of NSW at the Bundanoon Harmony Centre. Petrea King, Founding Director and CEO, is at the forefront of wellness education. She has written eight best-selling books which are available on the Quest for Life website.

The Weston A. Price Foundation

www.westonaprice.org

A nutrition education foundation with the mission of disseminating accurate, science-based information on diet and health. It is a non-profit nutrition education foundation with no ties to the food industry. In addition to his work on nutrition, Dr Price conducted extensive research into effects of root canals on systemic illness and autoimmune reactions.