



Research Breakthroughs: Homeopathy in Cancer Care

New studies offer hope—show significant positive effects

by CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON, ND

TWO IMPORTANT STUDIES ON THE USE OF HOMEOPATHY IN CANCER HAVE RECENTLY BEEN PUBLISHED. Both involved relatively large numbers of participants and had very impressive results.

One study demonstrated greater effectiveness in treating certain types of cancers—stomach, liver, gallbladder, pancreatic—than any treatment yet assessed by modern research methods¹. If replicated, the protocol would represent a true breakthrough in treating these intractable malignancies—greatly increasing patient survival. Another study showed statistically significant improvements in life quality for patients receiving homeopathic treatment alongside conventional care².

Taken together, these two studies of homeopathy in cancer treatment represent a significant step forward, as research data in this area has been limited.

HOMEOPATHY AS FIRST-LINE TREATMENT

The first study used homeopathy as the primary treatment of cancer—meaning, treatment with the intent to cure without using conventional oncologic treatment. It was a non-randomized, observational trial conducted at the Critical Cancer Management Research Centre and Clinic in Kolkata, India.

The findings were presented at the 2009 American Society of Clinical Oncologists (ASCO) Annual Conference, the world's leading professional cancer organization, and an abstract was published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

There were 158 subjects with the following cancers: 42 stomach, 40 gallbladder, 44 pancreas, and 32 liver. Patients had inoperable malignant tumors that were confirmed by standard pathological testing and had no prior chemotherapy or radiation. Nearly all had locally advanced or metastatic disease, with 71% diagnosed at stage IV and 25% at stage III.

The protocol involved administering the homeopathic remedy *Psorinum* 6X daily, along with supportive homeopathic and conventional care. Conventional supportive care included control of infection,

pain, electrolyte balance, bleeding, etc. Homeopathic supportive care consisted of homeopathic remedies prescribed on a pathological basis (as opposed to a patient-individualized basis).

High survival rates

The results were astonishing, with survival rates many times greater than that achieved with conventional treatment or any other rigorously assessed cancer care. For instance, the 5-year survival rate of patients receiving conventional treatment for stage III and IV pancreatic adenocarcinoma, the most deadly of all common malignancies, is approximately 2%^{3,4}. In this study, 38.6% survived 5 years.

Conventionally treated liver cancer has a 1-year survival rate of 20% and a 3-year survival rate of 5%⁵. With the *Psorinum* protocol, 81% survived 1 year, and 59% survived 3 years. An astounding 43.75% survived 5 years. For stomach cancer patients, 38% of participants survived 5 years, compared to the conventional 5-year survival rate of less than 20%⁶.

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Overall, 33% of study participants with stage III disease had a complete disappearance of all cancerous lesions without disease progression or appearance of any new lesions; 41% had at least 30% shrinkage of tumors. Among those with stage IV disease, 10.7% had complete and 34% had partial tumor response.

Improved quality of life

Quality of life was also significantly improved compared to standard care. 60% of people with stage III and 45% with stage IV disease reported “the therapy was effective in reducing their cancer-related pain, cough, dyspnea, nausea and vomit-

ing, fatigue, constipation and improving appetite and weakness.” Further, “no adverse side effects were observed from the drug *Psorinum*. However, very few patients reported to have mild oral irritation and skin itching which were successfully controlled by supportive care.”

At the 2010 ASCO Annual Conference, the same researchers presented promising results of another trial—use of the *Psorinum* protocol for 95 patients with inoperable lung cancer⁷. The 5-year survival rate was 44% compared to 16% with conventional treatment⁸. Again, the abstract was published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. The full study is not yet published.

Impressive data

Though the trials were not randomized or controlled, the data are noteworthy for a number of reasons: 1) the extraordinary degree of effectiveness of the treatment in some of the most difficult-to-treat malignancies—no published study has demonstrated anything even close to these results; 2) survival rate as an outcome measure is

completely objective (not subject to bias), and unlikely to be due to chance; 3) there already exists a very large body of data demonstrating the degree of effectiveness of conventional treatment approaches; and 4) the trials comprise a fairly large study group, with 253 total subjects.

The primary limitation of the studies is that they did not control for the effects of the supportive homeopathic care. We already know what to expect from supportive conventional care, so it is not much of a variable. However, we are left wondering how much of the effectiveness was due to the *Psorinum* therapy itself versus the supportive homeopathic remedies that were

extensively used. In any case, this is a *good* problem and likely to be figured out in the future. We look forward to more from these investigators on the subject, as they have reported that a phase III (larger, more rigorous) clinical trial is in the works.

HOMEOPATHY AS COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENT

The second study examined the effect of homeopathic treatment on the quality of life in cancer patients who were also receiving conventional oncologic care. It was published in the journal *BMC Cancer* by doctors at University Hospital Zurich (Switzerland), University Hospital Freiburg (Germany), and the Tumor Biology Center at Albert Ludwig's University Freiburg (Germany).

There were 259 subjects in the homeopathic/conventional group and 380 in the conventional-only group; it should be noted that 10% of the homeopathic group refused recommended conventional care. The type of homeopathy used was the traditional "constitutional" approach, in which a single remedy is chosen based on individualized characteristics (as opposed to common pathological or medical indications). Breast cancer was most common in study participants, followed by colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, and melanoma.

The primary outcome measure was change in quality of life. Secondary outcome measures were change in fatigue, psychological well-being, and patient satisfaction. All were measured using widely accepted assessment tools. Patients were assessed at 3 and 12 months.

Significant findings

The following data emerged in the homeopathic group:

- Quality of life improved significantly at 3 months and further at 12 months—twice as much as the conventional group (and in the upper range of the clinical significance scale)
- Mental and physical fatigue and physical activity improved significantly at 3 and 12 months
- Anxiety and depression did not change

The following data emerged in the conventional group:

- Quality of life was slightly improved at 12 months (at the bottom edge of the clinical significance scale)
- Fatigue did not change
- Anxiety and depression did not change

Food for thought

This trial was meant to reflect real-world medical practice and decision-making by patients and doctors. The participants were not randomized and were free to choose their course of treatment. Doctors were free to recommend individualized treatment protocols.

Although the two groups were well-matched at entry to the study in terms of symptoms, there were important disparities, namely: 1) demographics—the homeopathic group was more likely to have a higher level of post-graduate education and to be white collar workers or self-employed; 2) stage of disease progression—the homeopathic group was more likely to have a more severe diagnosis or progressed tumor stage, and had a longer elapsed time since first diagnosis; and 3) types of therapies used—the homeopathic group used less chemotherapy and radiation, due to already having used more prior to study entry.

These differences precluded statistically valid comparison of the two groups as matched pair controls. Nevertheless, the data clearly suggests that homeopathic treatment is beneficial to cancer patients as a whole.

If anything, the differences should have favored a greater improvement in the conventional group—the participants were at earlier stage of illness and therefore more amenable to treatment. Some would argue that greater results are to be expected from a sicker population (the homeopathic group) who have more potential for improvement. While this may be true in non-degenerative or self-limiting conditions, it is certainly not the case in cancer, where advanced progression of disease is nearly always associated with worse symptom scores and poorer response to treatment.

Some would argue the conventional group fared worse due to greater exposure to chemotherapy and radiation—but these interventions would likely have been finished in the first months of treatment, and outcomes at 12 months should not have been negatively influenced by their side effects.

Improved life quality—spiritual & physical

Even considered as a separate pool of data, the results achieved in the homeopathic

group were "by all standards, a clinically relevant improvement." As the authors concluded: "We have shown that under homeopathic care, sizeable benefits were achieved for patients' quality of life, as measured by FACT-G and also for spiritual well-being as measured by the FACIT-Sp. The improvement was clinically relevant and statistically significant. It could also be seen in symptoms of physical and mental fatigue. Thus our data suggest that classical homeopathic care could complement conventional cancer care to the benefit of patients."

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