

LETTER to the EDITOR

Cancer Patients, Complementary Medicine and Unmet Needs in Saudi Arabia

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Dear Editor

The article by Sait et al. (2014) explored an important research area, not only in Saudi Arabia but worldwide. But although the study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, it did not refer to the increasing number of published studies in Saudi Arabia in complementary medicine (CM) and specifically in relation to cancer. A simple search in the PubMed can retrieve almost 30 Saudi studies about Cancer and CM and more than 300 records on CM in Saudi Arabia. The information gathered from the small number of participants included in the current study could be enriched with the information gained from other related published studies in Saudi Arabia.

Jazieh et al. (2012) in their study on more than 450 cancer patients reported that (90.5%) used some type of CM remedy although they were treated in one of the most advanced medical care in Saudi Arabia. A phenomenon which was described as a paradox of health care and it leaves no doubt that patients with chronic conditions are seeking healing outside the boundary of the modern healthcare system in this country because physicians are not providing a holistic approach and are ignoring patients' growing demands for respecting their choices and to be included in the management plan. (Albedah., 2013) Oncologist should remove the barriers and start to talk with their patients about complementary therapies as the majority does not disclose their use of complementary therapies to their oncologists. Patients may expose themselves to possible detrimental effects from the therapies due to drug interactions.

Chronic patients including Cancer patients are expected to look for an alternative to compensate for their unmet needs. We should guide those demands and give our patients the best of both worlds, complementary and modern medicine in a patient centered integrative oncology health care (Cramer et al., 2013).

In Saudi Arabia where Complementary medicine is widely used (Albedah et al., 2013) we developed a model of integrative clinics in two Ministry of health hospitals and we developed an evidenced based integrative protocols to be used in specific conditions (Albedah et al., 2013) This models should be extended to oncology but it needs more research on integrative oncology and more emphasis on patient centered outcomes and comparative effectiveness evidenced based decision making.

References

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