Welcome

May you have Peace in your thoughts, Peace in your words. Peace in your heart. (Five Parks Yoga)

Why Me?

What is Integrative Oncology from a patient’s perspective?

- Physical
- The head and body are connected. You can’t just treat the body part. Address guilt from past behavior head on. That was in the past. You have choices in front of you now.
- Spiritual
- Financial toxicity
- Sex
- Work performance
- Long-term side effects of treatment (I will get into detail later)
- Social (caregiver/family/family of origin)
Diagnosis
- Sometimes people can become suddenly frozen after hearing his or her cancer diagnosis. It is as if time stops.
- They may go to the oncologist guilt ridden about their past behavior. Guilt will not help. Cancer provides an opportunity to take a different path.


Health Disparities
- Disparities exist when social, financial disadvantages, and the environment place a burden on certain groups, generating a situation in which rates of developing or dying from cancer are higher.

Health Disparities
- People with less education are more likely to die before 65 from colorectal cancer. Cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities
- Obstacles in obtaining quality health care are caused by, not understanding the health system, screening sites that are too far away, no or inadequate health insurance, no car or public transportation, no paid medical leave and must take time-off from work to go to the doctor. Paid under the table

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Health Disparities continued....

- Food deserts
- Lack safe places to exercise lead to inactivity becoming overweight, as well as not eating the rainbow of foods with all those rich antioxidants.
- If you are someone of color like me and you have made it out of poverty you can still experience disparities due to institutional racism, bias among health care providers, mistrust, and doom and gloom around cancer.
- There are differences in how tumors, genetics and the immune environment presents among Blacks diagnosed with colorectal, prostate and triple negative breast cancer.
- We know there is a lack of research participants among people of color.
- National Cancer Institute

Who knew the Nervous System was so vital
(Deb Dana, Stephen Porges, Peter Levine et al.)

- Ventral Vagal-safe and connected
- Sympathetic-mobilized for flight or fight
- Dorsal Vagal-immobilized/collapsed

Help your patients identify the Who, What, Where, Smells, touch, sights, taste and sounds that are connected to the various states in the autonomic nervous system.

- Have people write their cancer stories describing the different states they were in before they heard that six-letter word, when they went to the oncologist for their treatment plan, and where they are today. Too many are in a Dorsal Vagal State once diagnosed with cancer.

Distrust in the Medical System

- Journal of Psychosomatic Research published an article in September of 2007 that was specifically speaking about women with breast cancer but no surprise researchers found that if you reported child abuse it was harder for you to feel supported by the clinical staff. Perhaps, these women were still living in a sympathetic state so it would be very hard to connect with others.

- Further, there is little doubt that attachment does play a role in how well a patient can trust his or her doctor. Anxiously attached patients will have a more difficult time because they fear being abandoned or being rejected by his or her doctor.

- Sometimes a patient can be judged as being noncompliant, but it might only just be that he or she was overwhelemed. http://oncologytimes.org/pt/pt/ob/attachment.html

- Don Dizon, an oncologist wrote an article about shared decision making with patients about surveillance after treatment. He listens to what patients have to say and proceeds with a plan to make both he and his patient comfortable.

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Test results

- Waiting for test results is hard. No doubt.
- What can patients do? Focus on themselves and allow their health to be the priority. Use visualization or other imagery. According to Dr. Daniel Vicario of the UC at San Diego Medical Center this can be very helpful.

- Comprehensive Cancer Care: Integrative Oncology with Daniel Vicario MD and Paul J. Mills, 17, May 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M437G5G5pww&t=29s

Let's take some time to take the Adverse Childhood Experience Survey

- No one else will see your score.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Low score on ACES does not guarantee a well-adjusted adult
- ACES provides a way of conceptualizing someone’s premorbid level of functioning in order to provide a framework.
- High ACES score might indicate someone who will easily be triggered by the process of going through cancer treatment.

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Impact of Trauma

- A home environment where there is senseless abuse leaves a child thinking as Linda T. Sanford states "inherently unlovable"
- Dr. Judith Herman writes in her landmark book about the sense of a "foreshortened future." Herman's conclusion about the impact of this type of trauma in your life suggests it would easily lead to depression and possibly immobilization after a cancer diagnosis.


De Novo

- Of those who are diagnosed, specifically, with breast cancer, 6-10% of people are at Stage 4.
- https://www.mdpi.com/2077-0983/10/1/136/htm

Cancer and Suicide

- Twice as high as the general population.
- Risk factors: psychiatric history, previous attempts, hopelessness, demoralization, lack of social support, depression, burden to others, sense of loss of purpose, dignity, regret and having cancer as a child.
- Most risky time is the first year of diagnosis. The risk remains for the first five years.
- https://www.cancernetwork.com/view/suicide-patients-cancer-identifying-risk-factors
Toxic Friends and Family

- Support from family and friends is vital; however, sometimes people promise to come visit and don’t, divorce you, never contact you as if you have a communicable disease, compare your cancer to someone else’s minimizing the effects, still have the same expectations of you, or make your cancer about him or her.
- People with toxic behaviors say hurtful comments.
- It’s essential that your patients do not assume that friends and family behavior is a reflection on them. Ask your patients to talk to themselves like a best friend.
- Ask your patients to surround themselves with people who do not stress them out. Ask people who are protective to do exactly that—sorry he, she or they “cannot talk right now.”

Mind and cancer

- Two people with the same cancer type may have very different reactions.
- However, few if anyone gets to return to his or her old life due to the side effects of cancer.
- Cancer is not a buffet so we can’t just have the treatment and wipe our hands of cancer. Sometimes the bigger challenges come after the bell is rung after treatment ends.
- Many people feel alone finding your cancer tribe ends that isolation.
- Many may try to return to work too quickly before coming to terms with what they have been through. Side effects and mental health may decline quality of life at work and at home.
- It is very hard on cancer patients when they lose friends to cancer and it is easy to feel survivor’s guilt. Help them by introducing a mantra—not my door, not my time.

Therapy techniques

- Talk about toxic positivity. Emotional Agility author Susan David recommends that it is much better to acknowledge the obstacles. Expectations are crucial. Rigid about their cancer treatment. Spiraling.
- Lots of advice from friends, practice responses, such as: (Thanks, I will think about that).
- Volunteering helps get people out of the most dangerous neighborhood the one between their ears.
- Listen for cognitive distortions.
- Use mantras to help people move out of stuck thoughts.
- Teach your patients to say, “I am feeling x instead of I am y”. One describes a state, while the other gets an affective state wrapped up into identity.
- Self-compassion helps alleviate anxiety, depression and stress.

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Adjunctive

▪ Reiki (Penn)
▪ Acupuncture
▪ Yoga (YouTube or Facebook or in person)
▪ Drawing
▪ Dancing
▪ Knitting
▪ Food as fuel instead of comfort
▪ Meditation (YouTube)
▪ Oncology massage
▪ Chi Gong (YouTube) Sloan Kettering

Adjunctive continued

▪ Ceramics
▪ Music Therapy
▪ Laughter Yoga (YouTube)
▪ Watch comedies
▪ Volunteer work in the community
▪ Cancer is an opportunity to find and pursue his or her passion.
▪ Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) - Cancer Support Community
▪ Biofeedback


Cancer in Teens and Young Adults

▪ Everyone wants to be part of a group. Cancer definitely sets teens/young adults apart from their peers.
Parenthood and Cancer

- Energy
- After school programs
- Make a list of chores
- What are your priorities?
- The importance of me time
- Let others help you (Lotshelpinghands)
- Parenting While Living With Cancer | Cancer.Net
  - When You Have Cancer and You're a Parent, "Your Stories" Podcast | Cancer.Net

Parenthood continued

- What to tell the kids?
- Be honest with kids.
- Kids might blame themselves thinking it is their fault their mom or dad has cancer. Kids might automatically put cancer=death.
- There are free camps for kids and free services available

Cancer and Men

- Skin cancer is common among men according to the American Cancer Society.
- Skin cancer can be disfiguring depending upon the location of the cancer.
- Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer for men although more men die in the US of Lung cancer.
- Side effects from cancer treatment can cause low libido, erection issues and identity as a man, and urinary incontinence.

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Effective Communication with the team

- Advocacy: Role play with your client if that is what they need.
- If there is trust-less side effects and complications
- Encourage patients not to allow providers into shaming patients (others have tolerating painful procedures).
- Ok to ask for Ativan, some of the testing is loud and more than 45 min.
- Take notes and have someone go with her/him to the big appointments treatment plan.
- Encourage use of the patient portal.
- Encourage your patient to get what they need in a calm assertive way.

Some of the side effects of cancer treatment

- Hair
- Hormone therapy for men undergoing prostate cancer
- Bone health issues, breast does not look the same, early menopause, dizziness and depression, fatigue, insomnia, infertility, joint and muscle pain, hot flashes, vaginal dryness, feels like your body is a stranger, weight gain, problems with memory and concentration, lymphedema, neuropathy, chronic pain, new cancer caused by the chemotherapy or radiation, cardiac issues from the chemo meds and deaths.
- Oncologists really have no idea
- Cancer patients need encouragement
- Mitigate side effects of treatment by an integrative oncology approach. Ask your patient to view chemo as healing instead of toxic poison. Use healing therapies like acupuncture to help with side effects like nausea, pain, hot flashes (Vicaro, D.)

Noncompliance in cancer treatment

- Side effects are too much.
- Dr. Liz Riordan from Breast Cancer Now says it is much better for a patient to take a break rather than lie about whether they are taking their medication.
- Sometimes people have allergies to the fillers in medicine so before they decide to quit ask their doctor to consider switching manufacturers.
- Some women will only have surgery even though they increase their risk of dying by 40%. Why? Side-effects of meds, time it takes, cost. Many who refuse are women of color.
Stopping Cancer in its tracks

- Where you start for treatment matters. If you have a common cancer it is not so important but if you have a rare type of cancer finding the experts is essential.
- Reduce inflammation which helps the immune system fight off the cancer.
- Mind body therapies can reduce inflammation in the body, shifting the body to a parasympathetic state which affects gene expression. [https://www.mdpi.com/2077-0383/10/1/136/htm](https://www.mdpi.com/2077-0383/10/1/136/htm)

Let's do some breathing

- Sigh
- Yoga breathing
- 4 square breathing
- Deep belly breathing: exhale longer than inhale

Body Betrayal

- Unlike many other cancers, breast cancer often results in amputation.
- Most cancers are not inherited.
- Anger, mistrust and rage at the body are not uncommon emotions.
- Use a cognitive reframe, yes, you do have scars, although, you also have a good story to tell.

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Body Betrayal continued
- It is not uncommon for people to be frustrated that their body does not work like it used to. There is a lot of grief that they struggle to get out of bed or go to work.
- Sometimes it can be very hard to focus due to chemo brain or anesthesia brain.
- Many times there is weight loss or weight gain that is involved with cancer and this can be hard.
- It is crushing for most people to see their hair falling out in clumps on their pillow or in the shower.
- It is hard to experience how tired and or stressed our caregivers all are because we have cancer.

Intimacy
- Encourage experimentation. If needed, there are people who specialize in helping patients get sex life back
- Estrogen is a lubricant to the vagina and to the joints. Medication for hormone positive breast cancer can decrease estrogen.
- Once hysterectomies and breasts are removed lubrication becomes an issue for intimacy. Use organic coconut oil or Uber Lube or Dryness (estrogen cream is only absorbed in the vagina not in the blood stream).

Why Exercise?
- Decrease the risk of recurrence
- Prevention! Exercise reduces risk for seven types of cancer.
- Better survival rates.
- Exercise offsets the risk that comes with sitting.
- No need to be an Ironman.
- Weight training
- Exercise reduces fatigue, improves sleep, mood and bone health

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Fear of Recurrence
- Can tap into the Dorsal/Vagal freeze state.
- Lots of anxiety before scans and waiting for labs

- https://www.nature.com/articles/s41380-020-00865-6

What helps when patients are frozen/overwhelmed?
- Shower
- Bath
- Calling a friend
- Exercise
- Yoga
- Lots of little things add up to give comfort
- Before scans try not to schedule too much stuff.

Death is unavoidable
- Advance Directive?
- Living will?
- Your wishes
- Hospice
- Legacy they want to leave behind.

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Ask about

- Exercise
- Humor
- Stress reduction
- Sleep
- Overwhelmed
- Lonely
- Irritability
- Tears

Caregivers

- Need support
- Identity
- Caregiver secret keeper
- Breaks to relax (caregivers.com)
- Food
- Doing something fun
- Use the support system

Resources for Caregivers

- Cancer support community center offers support services for the patient, caregiver and children.
- Facebook support groups
- Don't push down all those feelings
- Forgive any mistakes


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Sources


Resources for Providers to Share with Patients

- https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/integrative-medicine/therapies/guided-imagery

- "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." — Albert Einstein