

Integrative Medicine in Cancer Care: Bridge Research Findings and Clinical Practice

Prof. Gary Deng, MD, PhD

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and Weill Cornell Medical School of Cornell University, New York, United States

Introduction:

Many cancer patients are interested in complementing mainstream allopathic medicine care with approaches and therapies from other health care traditions, such as those from naturopathy, anthroposophic medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic medicine. Their goal is to take advantage of anything that may help them deal with cancer and achieve the best outcome, regardless the origin of the therapeutic practice.

On one hand, these practices offer unique elements that are appealing to patients or produce special clinical benefits. For example, many such practices emphasize on a holistic approach to health that addresses not only physical, but also mental and spiritual wellbeing. They also incorporate non-pharmacologic interventions and self-care measures. On the other hand, those practices were developed before the advent of modern biological and medical science. As a result, some practices appear not supported by our current understanding of the human body and mind, which hinders their acceptance by a wider audience. What need to be done is to reconcile and integrate the various paradigms, based on scientific research and clinical practices informed by evidence. This is what we mean by “integrative medicine”.

In this presentation, Professor Deng will review and discuss cancer patient’s needs in integrative oncology, how integrative oncology may help patients, what the theoretical framework is, how it is being practiced, how the practice is guided by scientific research, how to gain support from stakeholders from mainstream medical communities, how to disseminate knowledge, why it is important to keep innovating, what the main barriers are, and what is needed to move the field forward and make integrative oncology part of standard cancer care.