

## Alternative approaches

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**I do not have any personal experience of successful treatment of prostate cancer by any alternative approaches and the information given below has been gleaned from various medical sources.**

### **Diet**

There is good evidence that dietary factors are important in the development of many cancers including prostate cancer. However, there is doubt about the value of changing your diet once a cancer develops.

Patients who have gone to centres that offer dietary advice may come away from their residential courses feeling that they have participated in a wonderful experience. They may alter their diet slightly or not at all as a result of this experience, but what they have benefited from is the experience of sharing their troubles with people who have time to listen to them, cancer patients and residential course staff.

### **Alternative medicines**

The testing of herbal medicines is much less rigorous than the testing of conventional medical products. We have found in alternative medicines toxic compounds that may cause side-effects and also the natural equivalents of drugs that are used to treat prostate cancer. Some of these substances include steroids and female hormones and will by themselves lead to an improvement in PSA levels, or sometimes in symptoms.

One of the most popular of recent alternative medicines has been PC Spes. This product does have significant activity in patients with prostate cancer. This is because it contains plant equivalents of diethylstilboestrol, a synthetic female hormone used to treat prostate cancer. Medical studies have shown that patients do improve with PC Spes. However, this improvement comes with a downside. There is toxicity, patients develop breast swelling and have indigestion. These are symptoms that are common in patients taking diethylstilboestrol and one of the reasons why treatment with diethylstilboestrol is only rarely prescribed nowadays.

### *Shark fin*

Shark fin extract is sold to patients with prostate cancer and indeed to many patients with malignancies other than prostate cancer. The theoretical basis for the use of shark fin is that sharks, to our knowledge, do not develop cancer. Shark fin extract is used to treat patients with cancer in the hope that they will be like sharks and not have any tumours. There is absolutely no theoretical evidence that this is of benefit. It is most expensive.

### *Teas*

There has been much interest in the observation that cancer of the prostate is much less common in people of Asian origin. Although the reason for this is thought to be purely dietary, there is a school of thought that the use of herbal teas is part of the reason for the lower rate of prostate cancer in the Far East. Green teas have become popular as a supplement for patients with cancer.

### *Vitamins*

It is possible that limited vitamins and trace element consumption has contributed to the development of malignancy. Many patients take vitamin and trace element supplements. Vitamin C and B complex are safe to take, as are recommended amounts of metals such as Zinc, and trace metals, such as Selenium. Patients should be very careful about taking Vitamins A, D and E because, in excess amounts, these vitamins will cause very significant medical problems, and occasionally death. It is very important to take the dosages recommended in the information leaflets.

### *Homeopathy*

The addition of tiny amount of a compound is thought by the homeopaths to restore balance and contribute to good health. Homeopathic remedies are prepared by serial dilution of a substance thought to have some activity which is called the mother. At each step the solution is shaken and the final dilution is thought to confer healing properties.

It is very difficult to establish a rationale for the effect of homeopathic remedies. Why should it be that a grain of salt diluted 14 billion times should be a cure for cancer? However, despite this reservation, there is no doubt that visits to homeopaths are enormously beneficial for patients and this may be because of the enormous psychological support that is offered to patients when they visit a homeopath.

### **Psychic Surgery**

The practitioners of psychic surgery delve into abdomens and produce what appear to be tumorous growths. They remove these growths and miraculously do so without leaving any evidence that the abdomen has been opened. There is no cut, there are no scars and the psychic surgeon has cured the

patient of his cancer. The psychic surgeons manage to extract significant amounts of money from the wallets of poor people desperate for life. The tumours miraculously removed by the psychic surgeons have been found to be pieces of chicken and the entrails of pigs.

In a nutshell there is no evidence base to support the use of alternative approaches for treatment of prostate cancer.