

## Integrative Cancer Therapy

In broad terms, there are two approaches to treating cancer -- conventional and alternative.

Surgery, radiation and chemotherapy are three common forms of conventional treatment. But they can destroy the quality of a person's life; they may even kill the patient as well as the cancer. Chemotherapy is actually a product of the use of mustard gas in the world wars.

Alternative medicine is used in place of conventional treatment. One example would be using a special diet to treat cancer instead of a method that an oncologist suggests. The American Medical Association routinely condemns such cancer treatments as quackery.

The truth of the matter is that there are advantages to both approaches. The wise thing is to combine the best of conventional and alternative treatments – it's called integrative medicine.

Stressing prevention and self-care, it neither rejects conventional medicine nor blindly accepts alternative practices.

It is a total care approach that involves the patient's mind, body and spirit. It combines conventional treatments with the alternative ones that have shown the most promise.

The American Association of Integrative Medicine says that health is more than the absence of disease. A multi-disciplinary approach to medicine, the organization says, provides the maximum therapeutic benefit.

Several years ago, Dr. Francisco Contreras, director of the Oasis of Hope Hospital, participated in a panel discussion on the relative merits of orthodox and alternative cancer therapies.

Someone, unsure what side Contreras was on after his seemingly conflicting comments, asked him, "Which is it, do you practice alternative medicine or orthodox medicine?"

"I do not want to practice orthodox or alternative medicine," he said. "I only want to practice good medicine."

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