

Advances in Cancer Care

by author Michelle Hancock

Complementary cancer treatment brings new hope to patients at the Vancouver clinic of Dr. Jim Chan, who uses the best of orthodox and alternative medicine to achieve impressive results. One ginseng extract in particular is showing amazing promise in helping bridge the gap.

After 13 years as a naturopathic doctor, Dr. Chan has seen 5,000 cancer patients, many of whom are diagnosed as "terminal" case—but not for long. When patients first arrive, their medical and personal histories are thoroughly reviewed, including all previous pathology and laboratory reports. Then they fill out Dr. Chan's own comprehensive personal survey. Additional tests may be conducted for immune function, digestion, endocrine system, level of stress and free radical load.

The point of gathering all this data is to get a picture of how healthy a patient is, to find out the body's strong and weak points, and to determine the possible causes of the cancer. "We know 15 percent of cancers are hereditary or genetic related," says Dr. Chan. "The rest are environmental." By environment, he means things a person is exposed to in everyday life, including food, water, chemicals, viruses and electromagnetic radiation.

Only after all the data is available for review does Dr. Chan lay out what he feels to be the most effective, individualized treatment plan. Like many naturopaths who work with cancer, he has no objection to orthodox cancer treatments, which may or may not be beneficial in a given case. "We must look at conventional intervention and ask, will it be meaningful or not?"

"Surgery, chemotherapy and radiation focus on attack. [Naturopathic physicians] also devise means to support the cells," he says. So, if patients choose to go the orthodox route, they can also use wholistic approaches to bolster the body's strength and healing abilities. The key is combining treatments to achieve the best possible results.

One treatment that Dr. Chan is very excited about involves a special ginseng extract called Careseng, which he calls the "first non-toxic natural cancer treatment that can be considered at par, if not better, in efficacy compared with most chemotherapies." Like regular ginseng, this product contains active compounds called ginsenosides, specifically, high amounts of Rh2 and Rg3, both known for their anti-cancer properties.

In animal studies, the supplement inhibited tumour growth, increased survival time, and, in some cases, caused complete tumour regression. Dr. Chan was involved in clinical trials in 1999. In one trial, 40 patients with various cancers—including lung, colon, liver and breast—took Careseng orally for 60 days. Seventy-five per cent of patients experienced tumour inhibiting effects with no side-effects or toxicity. In a second trial involving 15 patients, the intravenous version was effective in 80 percent of cases—again with no reported drawbacks. More studies are continuing.

The treatment has been shown to work in several ways. First, it stops cells from entering the cancerous growth stage. Second, it causes cancer cell death, and third, it can actually reverse drug resistance. "So in cases where chemo doesn't work, we can fix it," says Dr. Chan. For example, if someone becomes resistant to chemo drugs, which is very common in late stage cancer patients, taking Careseng can make the body's cells sensitive to treatment again.

Today, Dr. Chan uses Careseng with about 80 percent of his patients, who may also undergo other treatments such as acupuncture, supplementation with vitamins, minerals and herbs, medicinal peat baths (soaking in mineral-rich water) and sauna therapy (using far infrared heat chambers) to help the body detoxify.

His advice to cancer patients is to evaluate the risks and benefits of any chosen treatment. "For a doctor, it's difficult because we can never guarantee results. What works for one [patient] won't work for another. We have to be individualized."

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possible results [in treating cancer].

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