

Aromatherapy Beneficial in Complementary Cancer Care

By Jack Bleeker

Nearly all of us have been touched at one time or another by a personal or loved one's battle with cancer. In recent years, trends in cancer treatment have increased the utilization of what is known as integrative oncology. This practice stresses the use of alternative influences, such as aromatherapy, in conjunction with traditional cancer treatments. In many cases, the most debilitating effects of cancer are those side effects of traditional cancer treatments, like chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Those patients who are best able to manage symptoms of traditional treatments are those who are most likely to experience overall efficacy in their specific treatment regimens.

Aggressive cancers, such as mesothelioma (<http://www.mesothelioma.com/mesothelioma.htm>), are among those most commonly treated using the techniques of integrative oncology. These types of malignancies often require extremely toxic dosages of chemotherapy and radiation to effectively manage the tumor. Patients enduring the stress of such treatment will often find comfort and solace in aromatherapy and other alternative therapies. That which can induce a sense of calm and relaxation can effectively assist the patient in their battle against cancer.

What's important to remember is that no alternative therapy, including aromatherapy, can be used as a curative treatment for mesothelioma disease (<http://www.mesothelioma.com/disease.htm>) or other malignancy. What has been encouraging however, is an extended mesothelioma survival rate (<http://www.mesothelioma.com/survival-rate.htm>) in patients practicing integrative oncology techniques while undergoing treatment. For patients battling restlessness and nausea, essential oils like Lavender Highland (*Lavandula Vera*) can be utilized to create a peaceful, calming setting to encourage a good night's sleep.

For patient's battling immune system deficiencies associated with cancer care, essential oils like Bergamot and Eucalyptus can boost the body's internal organ's ability to defend and strengthen immune responses. Some patients will couple aromatherapy with massage or other therapy to make their own personal experience more complete and comprehensive. As with all integrative therapy techniques, personal preference is unique to each patient and nearly everyone's experience will be unique to them.

It is important to remember that each patient's needs and comfort levels are different with alternative therapies, but that all patients are encouraged to consider their utilization within their greater treatment plan. Patients undergoing cancer treatment should not commence the use of external or alternative therapies without first clearing their use with their oncologist or cancer specialist. While therapies such as meditation or aromatherapy will likely not be harmful to the patient, more aggressive integrative techniques like yoga or exercise may not be in their best interest. The practice of alternative treatment depends entirely on the patient's overall health and their willingness to explore these non-traditional areas.

References:

American Cancer Society: *Aromatherapy Overview*

National Cancer Institute: *Aromatherapy and Essential Oils*