

CANCER: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. 1. Can you cure cancer?

A: If you ask me whether I can cure YOUR cancer, the answer is NO. The cure of any disease has to come from within the patient. Doctors and medicines only help the patient to fight his own battle. Hence, the modified answer to your question is: “Yes, together we two can reverse the process of cancer hopefully leading to a cure.” One should however remember that cancer is a complex disease process caused by a variety of factors as explained in earlier chapters of this book. Sometimes, patients have negative attitude, hopelessness and mental blocks in the process of healing. In cancer, modern medicine states 5-year survival rate, rather than call it a cure. This generally means that if a cancer is controlled for 5 years, the chances of it coming back are very remote (although not impossible). Further a cancer patient could develop other diseases also, which could take the toll. Death is the other side of the coin we call life. We should make all the efforts to accept the challenge of cancer and do everything to improve the quality of life.

Q. 2. Doctors told me that my 2 years old son probably has leukemia. It has come as a shock to the whole family. What can we do now?

A: This is a very tragic situation, especially for the parents and family members. Doctors will conduct some more tests to determine the type of leukemia and its stage. Leukemia is a disease of white blood cells. The usual treatment for childhood leukemia is intensive chemotherapy for a few months followed by low dose chemotherapy for a couple more years. Some children are given radiation treatments to brain to minimize chances of leukemia spreading to brain. All these treatments are very toxic and produce a lot of side effects. In more than 80% patients, such treatments produce what we call a remission, which means no evidence of leukemic cells in the blood or body. You have to consider taking complementary treatment to support the general condition of the child during these trying times. If you refuse to undergo chemotherapy treatment for whatever reasons, you should consider complementary treatments with Ayurved, Herbs, and Nutrition etc. Complementary treatments do not guarantee any definite cure but these could be safer and less toxic to the patient. Some Ayurvedic practitioners claim good results in leukemia but the mainline

oncologists might not agree with this view. Finally, you have to decide for yourself what treatment options you wish to try.

Q. 3. My father has got a cancer of food-pipe diagnosed recently. He is 70 years old and he does not wish to take any treatment. We are forcing him to get admitted to a cancer hospital for operation. Please advise how we can handle this situation.

A: Cancer of esophagus (food-pipe) is usually diagnosed at late stage since the symptoms are vague and not attended to promptly. If the cancer is in early stage, which has not spread to lymph nodes or distant organs, major operation to remove the cancer has a fair chance of controlling the disease. Many times, during the operation, the surgeon finds that the cancer is too advanced and cannot be removed. Careful examination and medical tests should guide the surgeon to decide about the operation. Even after a successful operation, a course of chemotherapy and/ or radiotherapy would be usually recommended. Five-year survival rates for this type of cancer after conventional treatments are reported to be less than 10%. Please feel free to discuss with your doctors about chances of cure, side effects, expenses etc. beforehand. You should consider all these factors before making up your mind. However, the choice to either accept the operative treatment or decline it is entirely with the patient and his family. Your father is 70 years old and must have gone through a lot of experiences in his life. I can understand your anxiety to see your father get all the treatments recommended by your doctors. I suggest you do not force your father in making a decision he does not like in his heart. Let him decide what he wishes to do, after considering all the pros and cons of various options. I am not aware of your economic conditions to withstand all these expensive treatments. That should also be a factor in your decision-making.

Q. 4. My 56 years old brother developed pain in abdomen 2 months ago. A CT scan was recently taken and the doctors say it could be cancer of pancreas. Will operation cure this cancer?

A: Cancer of pancreas is a dangerous disease and usually inoperable. If the tests show that it can be completely removed by operation, this would help. Discuss all your questions about chances of cure, other treatments, expenses etc with your surgeon. You need also to take nutritional and other complementary therapies to support the patient during his illness. These are discussed at length in earlier chapters.

Q. 5. What is your opinion about Auto-urine therapy? Does it work?

A: Auto-urine therapy means drinking your own urine for treatment of your illness. The idea of auto-urine therapy could be repulsive for majority of the patients. I personally would not recommend it to my patients. However, if a patient is keen to try this, I have no objection. I have seen many patients who undertake such treatments and have subjectively reported good benefits. When a patient is on many medications, their breakdown products are excreted in urine. I do not know whether drinking such urine would be harmful or helpful. There are many books written on this subject in local languages as well as in English, which might give you more information. Mentioned in ancient Indian medical books as Shivambu Chikitsa, urine therapy was advocated by many prominent persons, including the former Prime Minister of India, Mr. Morarji Desai. Recently, Dr. Burzinski from Texas has discovered some polypeptides in human urine, which he termed as antineoplaston. Antineoplastons apparently help to shrink some cancer tumors. Other workers are giving urea, a substance found in urine, to treat liver cancer. This is a controversial topic. I would not be able to say whether or not urine therapy works in cancer treatment.

Q. 6. My mother is under cycles of chemotherapy for breast cancer. She is getting a lot of nausea and vomiting. Her skin and nails have got black spots. She gets burning sensation in body and feet. She is worried about loss of hair. Should she continue chemotherapy?

A: Without knowing all the details of the patients, especially stage and type of cancer, her general condition and response to earlier treatments, it would be difficult for me to give you any definite answers. Is this a palliative chemotherapy for her recurrent cancer or is it a routine post-operative preventive chemotherapy? Has the cancer been earlier operated successfully? What is her general condition like? Are her reactions very severe or mild? Does she wish to continue chemotherapy? When there is persistent cancer spread in the body, chemotherapy usually does not help much. Chemotherapy might be able to produce some temporary shrinkage of tumor, which is likely to come back. You need to discuss all these issues with your doctors and then take a wise decision. Regardless of what decision you might take, I would suggest the patient should have supportive nutritional, herbal and ayurvedic treatments to reduce the side reactions and to improve the quality of life.

Q. 7. I am working as a teacher. My wife suffers from cancer of stomach for past 3 months. She was operated but they could not remove the cancer tumor. They have now advised chemotherapy and told me that I should be prepared to spend about Rs 10000 per month for the next 6 months. It is very hard for me to gather that kind of money. Further the doctors say that there is no guarantee of any cure. I am scared. Please advice.

A: I am sorry to hear about the difficult situation you are facing. There is no effective chemotherapy for stomach cancer. At most, chemotherapy might produce temporary shrinkage of the tumor. You say that the stomach cancer could not be completely removed at the operation. Considering the nature of the disease, toxic effects of chemotherapy with no hope for cure and your economic hardship, it would be all right if you declined the chemotherapy. You should discuss this matter with your wife and give due consideration to her wishes. Please discuss all this aspects with the doctor who has recommended the chemotherapy treatments. Even if you decline chemotherapy, you should keep trying some of the complementary medical options, which might afford comparable or even better results. Please trust God and have faith. Miracles can happen. With positive attitude and all the support from the family, your wife can reverse the process of cancer.

Q. 8. Can you suggest any treatment for reducing reactions to chemotherapy?

A: Chemotherapy reactions are a common problem, dreaded by the patients. However, not everyone under chemotherapy gets severe reactions. Many patients tolerate chemotherapy complaining only mild side reactions. It depends mostly on the drugs and dosages used for chemotherapy and upon the constitution of the patient. Seen from Ayurvedic point of view, Pitta Prakriti (constitution) patients get more severe reactions than Kapha types. Lot of fluids and nutritional supplements with vitamins A, B-Complex, C, D and E would help reduce the degree of reactions. Praval-pishti, an organic calcium preparation from sea coral has a cooling effect, which reduces the intensity of reactions. Praval-pishti, two tablets twice daily can be taken during the course of chemotherapy. There are many more effective Ayurvedic medicines to help reduce reactions, for which you need to consult an Ayurvedic practitioner. Complaints like nausea, vomiting, pain etc can also be effectively controlled by some allopathic medications, which your doctors would prescribe.

Q. 10: Is there any certain treatment in Ayurved for cancer?

A: As far as I am aware, there is no certain treatment in ayurved to cure cancer. Cancer is a complex disease resulting from long-term constitutional and genetic disturbances. Ayurved tries to restore the normal functioning of organs and enable body to fight disease. It does not have any specific medicines to kill the cancer cells directly. Ayurved has a definite role to play as a supplemental therapy in overall management of cancer disease. Some traditional Ayurvedic practitioners report good results with Heerak Bhasma (made from diamond). There are many other claims associated with other formulae.

Q.11. The doctor giving radiation treatment to my father got angry with us since we were giving some Ayurvedic medicines side by side without the doctor's knowledge. He says this has spoilt the case. My father is now worried. What can we do to please the doctor?

A: It would have been good if you had informed the doctor about the Ayurvedic medicines you are giving your father during radiation treatment. Open-minded doctors would try to get more information about other systems rather than get angry with the patients in such situations. In our experience, Ayurvedic medicines do not “spoil” the cases, rather if used properly, “help” the cases. Try to discuss this matter with the doctor without being worried. Do not be intimidated. After all, it is the health of your father, which is at stake. As a last resort, you may even look for a better doctor, who is open-minded and more sympathetic.

Q. 12. Should we take large doses of vitamin C and Vitamin E during chemotherapy cycles, as suggested by a friend who herself underwent chemotherapy cycles a few months ago?

A: As per the recent research, large doses of vitamin C (1000 to 2000 mg daily) and natural vitamin E (200 to 400 mg daily) during chemotherapy are found to be beneficial. These vitamins are effective in 1. Counteracting damaging free radicals that are liberated during chemotherapy. 2. Help maintain normal tissue function and oxygenation of cells. 3. Possibly enhance effects of chemotherapy. Linus Pauling, the Nobel Laureate, advocates very high doses of vitamin C to help cure many diseases. Vitamin C is given in very large doses (10000 to 15000 mg) through intravenous drips in some Alternative Medical Centers abroad. This has to be done under strict medical supervision. For an average patient, oral consumption of vitamins in doses given in the beginning should suffice.

Q. 13. We want to give best treatment to our father who has been diagnosed to have lung cancer. My sister lives in America. We want to know if taking him to America will help?

A: I am happy to note that you wish to do everything possible for your father. There are various points to consider for an Indian wishing to take treatment in USA. India is fortunate to have very well trained doctors and excellent hospitals with all the medical facilities. In fact, Indian doctors are highly regarded in USA, UK and other countries for their knowledge, intelligence and hard work. All the major cities in India offer excellent medical facilities and well-trained doctors, which are comparable to hospitals abroad.

The medical treatment in USA is very expensive. Without health insurance, even local Americans cannot afford to go to hospitals. What is your economic situation? Has your sister asked your father to come to America for treatment or is this your idea to send your father to your sister over there? What does your father wish to do? Would he be more comfortable with family and friends at home in India or in USA where he might feel isolated? What type of cancer does he have? Would he require a prolonged treatment or a short swift operation to cure his cancer? All these points are very important to consider before you take any decision. Generally speaking, I do not advise my patients to go abroad for medical treatment, unless the patient himself is very keen to go and financially capable. Moreover, even if a cancer patient takes treatment in USA, later on he is bound to need local Indian doctors and hospitals for the long-term management of his disease.

Q.14: What is Tibetan Medicine? Does it work for cancer?

A: Tibetan Medicine, TM, is a system of herbal medicine developed in Tibet long time ago. This system is similar to Ayurved emphasizing on mind-body connection in disease, life-style changes, dietary changes and lastly herbal formulae for various types of patients and their illnesses. Like Ayurved, TM also describes three humors (dosha), viz. Wind (Vata), Bile (Pitta) and Phlegm (Kapha). Diagnosis is made by history and examination. Pulse diagnosis and urine examination are an integral parts of TM. Different herbal formulae are dispensed to the patients depending upon the diagnosis. These tablets are to be taken three times a day with water. Periodic changes are made in the medicines as per the response of the patient.

There is no simple Yes or No answer to your question whether TM works in cancer. Cancer is a complex disease. TM is aimed at restoration of the internal balance in body enabling it to fight disease. These medicines do not kill cancer cells directly. As a complementary treatment, Tibetan Medicine is worth a trial.

Q.15. My father was operated for tongue cancer and then given radiation and chemotherapy 6 months ago. Now a new gland has appeared in the lower part of neck. Doctors want to give more radiation and possibly more chemotherapy later on. Please let us know if we should follow this advice.

A: Recurrence of tongue cancer and its' spread to lymph nodes in spite of full allopathic treatment is not rare. Depending upon the details of previous radiotherapy, a short second course of radiation can be given; avoiding previously radiated area as far as possible. Whether this will control the cancer remains to be seen. Chemotherapy, which has not worked the first time, can probably be declined since it is bound to produce more toxic side reactions with a very slim chance for tumor control. A lot depends upon the patient's condition and his readiness for further treatments. In any case, you should consider complementary therapy with Ayurvedic medicines to boost up his general condition and improve quality of life.

Q.16. Recently a friend of mine gave me some information about a mushroom product for treatment of cancer. We are thinking of trying it on my mother, who has got a cancer of uterus. Would it help?

A: Mushroom treatment, which originated in Japan, China and Korea, is now becoming popular all over the world. There are many thousand varieties of mushroom; only few have medicinal value. Maitake, Shiitake and Reishi are three important varieties of medicinal mushroom. Originally procured from forests as wild mushrooms, these are now being commercially cultivated in mushroom farms. Mushroom is considered more as a health restoring food supplement rather than a medicine. It does not act specifically against any disease. However, mushrooms are proved to improve cellular function, oxygenation, immunity and detoxification. Indirectly, mushrooms are known to help in many chronic diseases including cancer. In addition to the routine conventional cancer treatment, it might be worth trying mushroom supplements for your mother who has got cancer of uterus.

Q.17: My brother has got a gland size of a lemon in the axilla. Our family doctor insists that we should show my brother to a surgeon for biopsy. We have always taken Ayurvedic treatment for all our family members. Our Ayurvedic consultant says we should not operate. He feels confident that the gland will go away with Ayurvedic treatment. Whom should we follow?

A: We do not know what type of gland your brother has in axilla. It is important to know whether it is due to infection, benign tumor or cancer. The treatment will vary greatly in each case. I would suggest your brother should undergo a biopsy with pathological testing of the gland. Depending upon the report, further treatment can be considered.

Q.18. Can we refuse chemotherapy treatments advised to us by a specialist for the treatment of liver cancer in my father?

A: Accepting or refusing any treatment suggested by the doctors is entirely as per your choice. However, you should choose or refuse any treatment after getting detailed information about possible results of the treatment. A doctor should answer all your questions satisfactorily as far as possible. You may also get more information in this matter from the books, from the experiences of other patients who had such treatments and from other doctors. You have to weigh possible benefits against possible hardships. Chemotherapy is of temporary and marginal benefit in liver cancer. It does not cure liver cancer. Cost-benefit ratio, although considered a bad word in medical field, has to be assessed by the patient.

Q.19: What more can we do to help our mother recover from cancer of breast? She was operated and recently completed a course of chemotherapy. Her general condition has become very weak?

A: I assume that the cancer has been removed and at present she has no residual tumor. I do not know if any chemotherapy or radiotherapy was given to her. These therapies increase free oxidative radicals in body that lead to weakness and toxicity. Your mother would need a lot of supportive care now to recover her strength. Nutritional supplements with natural vitamins and minerals, anti-oxidant supplements, amino acids, essential fatty acids, fresh fruits and vegetables, light & easy to digest diet, Ayurvedic tonics such as Shatavari Kalpa, Badam Pak, Chyavan Prash etc would help. If she has got poor appetite or any other problems, it is better

to consult an Ayurvedic physician. She might need additional herbal and ayurvedic medicine to help her recover faster. You have to keep her under periodic check-ups of your oncology doctors to make sure that the cancer has not recurred.

Q. 20. We hear a lot about Aloe Vera these days? What is that? Does it help in Cancer treatment?

A: Aloe Vera is a thick leafy common green shrub. It grows wildly at many places and can be cultivated for commercial or home use. From the thick leaves, a clear paste like matter is taken out for medicinal use. In Sanskrit it is called Kumari and in Marathi- Koraphad. It is a great liver tonic. It improves liver function, which is essential for normal metabolism in body. It is also used for local applications in ulcers, burns and wounds. It helps digestion and stimulates immunity. The Ayurvedic medicine- Kumari Asav is made from Aloe Vera. Aloe Vera is also available as a dilute juice and as extract in a capsule form. It can be used as a nutritional supplement or herbal supplement for health maintenance. It can indirectly help as a supplementary treatment in cancer because of its' above listed properties.

Q. 21. What is immunity? My father was in good health all his life. My mother died 1 year ago at age 67. My father has now been diagnosed to have cancer of prostate. A friend of mine said that my father does not have immunity that is why he developed cancer. Is it possible?

A: Immunity is a natural disease fighting power in the body. It is a system of special white blood cells and tissue cells that act as police force to detect and destroy any unhealthy activities in body. In health, immune system is very efficient and sensitive to detect any “terrorist” activities in any part of the body, instantly. T-lymphocytes, B-lymphocytes, Natural Killer Cells, Macrophages, Interleukins etc are the components of the immune system. As soon as an “Enemy” is detected, immune cells send signals to other cells for help. In short period of time, a whole police force can gather at the site for the fight. Fight against the enemy is won by capturing the enemy cells and germs, neutralizing the toxins, and ultimately by destroying the offenders. Immunity is of many types and could have many components. A person may be immune to some diseases but may not be immune to some other conditions. Vaccination is one of the methods to stimulate immunity against certain infections like tetanus, measles, small pox, chicken pox, diphtheria, influenza etc.

When a foreign substance is introduced in the body, immune cells react and form what is called anti-body. The initial offender is called antigen, since it initiates the creation of antibody. Antibody attacks the antigen and neutralizes it. Later on the captured and altered antigens are eliminated from the body.

If immune system is deficient, cancer cells somehow evade this weakened immune system and start growing and spreading. Immunity is not a constant force and it is liable to vary from time to time. Good nutrition, exercise, mental happiness, good sleep are known to improve immunity, while lack of these things would reduce the immunity. Mental shocks and painful life events also reduce the immunity.

In the case of your father, who was in good health, the death of your mother might have been a very painful event that affected the immunity and triggered the cancer process. Cancer like cells are all the time wandering in the body, but with efficient immunity, these are detected and destroyed before producing a disease. Depressed immunity, on the other hand, is not able to deal with such criminal cells, which grow unchallenged in to a visible cancer tumor.

You have to understand that a person in good health could still have a weakness only in a part of immunity responsible for cancer. On the other hand, people who get frequent illnesses due to low general immunity may not necessarily get cancer. Low immunity can manifest in a variety of illnesses, cancer being only one disease.

Q.22. What is colostomy? Doctors are planning a colostomy on my father who has got cancer in rectum. Do we have to do it?

A: Colon is the large intestine that follows after the small intestine. At the lower end, colon becomes rectum through which the stools are discharged from the body. Colostomy means opening colon and bringing one end on the surface of abdomen. When a cancer tumor in the lower part of colon completely blocks the downward passage of the stools, a diversion is made for directing the stools. This is called as colostomy, which is a minor operation that can even be done under local anesthesia. Through a small incision in lower part of abdomen on the left side, a loop of colon is brought to the surface. Then the loop is opened and upper end of the loop is kept open and stitched on the surface of the abdomen. Through this portion, stools can be passed or removed daily by the patient. If this diversion is not done, the patient will develop complete intestinal obstruction due to accumulation of stools in belly. This

would be a very serious condition. Colostomy, by providing a diversion, relieves this problem. Colostomy is sometimes temporary, which can be closed later on after removal of the obstructing cancer lower down. If the cancer cannot be removed or if the lower colon has to be totally removed in an operation, then the colostomy becomes permanent, something the patient has to live with all his life. If your father were developing intestinal obstruction, then it would be necessary to do this operation. Please discuss the details with your surgeon.

Q. 23. Does acupuncture help in treatment of cancer?

A: Acupuncture is a part of Traditional Chinese Medicine, TCM. This system describes meridians, which are very subtle invisible channels traversing various parts of the body carrying vital energy to different organs. In Chinese, Chi means vital energy, which is Prana energy. Meridian system can be compared with the internal road system in a city, which is responsible for proper traffic of goods and persons in all the parts of the city. Energy supplied through the meridians help the normal function of all the internal organs. If a road is blocked, there would be slowdown and traffic congestion. Similarly, if a meridian were not functioning properly, there would be imbalance in the traffic of the energy within the body. If not corrected, this would cause various illnesses. A meridian out of balance can carry either too little or too much energy. Both the situations can lead to various symptoms and diseases. On the surface of human body, the actual path of meridians can be traced at certain points. These specific points are called acupuncture points. Inserting small needles at these points can restore the balance of circulation of Chi or Prana. Blockages in meridians can cause pain in related parts of the body. Acupuncture treatment usually helps to decrease pains. Acupuncture has been shown to relieve other symptoms like nausea, vomiting, fatigue, weakness, cramps, irritability etc. Whether acupuncture on its own can reduce cancer tumor is doubtful. Acupuncture can be used under a trained acupuncturist, as a complementary treatment for symptomatic relief.

Q. 24. My mother always took homeopathic remedies for all her problems. Six months ago she developed a lump in her breast. The lump is increasing under homeopathic treatment, but she is otherwise quite comfortable. Nobody can tell from outside that she is ill. What should we do?

A: Your mother had kept good health, which could be due to many factors; homeopathic medicine could be one of them. Homeopathic remedies at times, by the “law of similars”, are known to cause increase in the tumor size. However, you need not feel guilty about using

homeopathy. All the systems have some good and some weak points. It is difficult to say which way the lump will progress. At present, you should consider operation to remove the lump and have it studied by a pathologist. Further treatment can be decided upon final diagnosis of the breast lump. With the help from your family doctor, you should explain various possibilities to your mother and let her take the final decision about her treatments.

Q.25. Is there any cure for cancer in Alternative Medicine?

A: There is no definite guaranteed cure for all the cancers in any system, either in Alternative Medicine or in the Conventional Medicine. A “cure” depends upon the patient, his mental attitudes, upon the efforts the patient would take to help himself, support from cooperative family and finally upon the proper guidance from doctors. At present, integrated approach combining conventional therapies with complementary alternative therapies would be the best course to follow.

Q.26. What can we do to reduce nausea and loss of appetite in my mother, who is under chemotherapy?

A: Nausea and vomiting are common problems experienced by the patients during the course of chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments. Supplements of large doses of vitamins (especially A, C and E) and minerals should be taken to reduce the toxic free radicals liberated during these cancer treatments. These toxic radicals are partly responsible for many side reactions. Nausea is experienced due to irritability of stomach and intestines. A household remedy consisting of equal parts of shredded ginger, lemon juice and honey taken a teaspoonful at a time before mealtimes usually helps to reduce nausea and vomiting. A homeopathic remedy, Ipecac in 6X, 12 X or 12C taken 15 minutes before mealtime is also found to be helpful to reduce nausea and improve appetite. If these simple remedies do not work, you should use one of the allopathic medicine for nausea / vomiting in consultation with your doctors.

Q. 27. My sister has lost all her hair after chemotherapy? Will the hair grow back?

A: Loss of hair is a common problem during chemotherapy. Some chemotherapy drugs routinely produce hair loss, while certain drugs may spare hair. Please discuss about this with your chemotherapist. After completion of the chemotherapy cycles, hair will usually grow

back within 2 to 4 months. Please consider application of a natural / Ayurvedic hair oil containing Brahmi, Awala etc. to the head daily.

Q. 28. My doctors insist that I should eat a lot of high protein food frequently during day. I do not have good appetite. I am recovering from radiation treatments for my prostate cancer. Eating heavy food bothers me. Is it essential that I force food on myself?

A: Unless your digestive power (Agni) is normal, eating a lot of heavy, high protein food would not help. The improper digestion of such foods may even cause other medical problems. First try to improve your appetite and eat food as per your appetite. It is better to eat a little less than to eat too much. Do not force food upon yourself. There are certain Ayurvedic herbs to stimulate your appetite, Agni and digestion. Consult an Ayurvedic physician in this matter.

Q.29. Do you believe in Spiritual Healing? Does it cure cancer?

A: I believe in any method that can help patient heal. Healing is a nature's mystery, which probably depends equally upon innate mental strengths as well as external treatments for a disease. All the methods, conventional or alternative, are based on some assumptions and theories. When it works, that method is hailed as the right one. Obviously, sometimes deliberate frauds are performed by practitioners of various methods for monetary gains. This should be condemned. However, to dismiss any method out of ignorance is not very scientific, either.

Spiritual Healing is based on the principle that every living thing is enveloped in an energy sheath. Invisible to human eye, this subtle body can be called variously as an astral body, vital body, sookshma sharira, linga-deha, aura etc. The health and function of the physical body depend upon health of the subtle body. Most of the diseases start due to disturbances in this sheath. A spiritual healer can either feel or see these abnormalities. A successful spiritual healer can correct the defects and clear up the blocks in subtle sheath, thus helping the person to recover from his illnesses.

A successful spiritual healer can correct the defects and clear up the blocks in subtle sheath, thus helping the person to recover from his illnesses. Dr. Geoffery Morell, a spiritual healer

from Washington DC, has visited us in Mumbai several times and given demonstrations of the spiritual healing to our patients. He could correctly locate the disease process in the body by mere passing the hands around the body. His observations would tally with the findings on scans and x-rays, which we did not disclose to him earlier. Even without taking full history of the patient, Dr. Morell could often describe various problems the patient might have had in the past or is having currently.

Spiritual healing is a cleansing process of the subtle body. This is not a permanent cure for any disease. The patient has to work hard to keep his spirit, mind and emotions clean and healthy; otherwise the dirt can accumulate again. It is like house cleaning, which needs to be done periodically. We have noticed significant improvement in various common complaints after the sessions of spiritual healing. In my own case, painful arthritis of my left knee, which did not respond even to steroid injections into the joint 2 years ago, was greatly relieved by a session of spiritual healing from Dr. Morell. Previously unable to walk even for a 100 meters because of pain, I can now walk comfortably even for a couple of kilometers a day. The old bones and old joints are still there, but the pain is gone!

I would not suggest that you should rely on spiritual healing alone for cure of cancer, which needs a multi-pronged attack. Spiritual healing could help you in a complementary way to remove any blocks and negativities in your subtle body. The success depends upon ability of the healer as well as your faith and receptivity.

Q. 30. I am 50 years old man and work as a manager of a manufacturing company in Mumbai. I wish to go for cancer check-up. What will they do?

A: various hospitals and doctors offer routine medical check-ups to health conscious people, who may be in apparently good health. Many companies even pay for health check-ups for their employees. The Indian Cancer Society and some other private hospitals also offer Cancer check-ups. You should initially have a general medical check-up, which would include some basic blood tests, cardiogram and chest x-ray. Consultant physicians of each hospital will then examine you. You might be asked to undergo more tests if needed, depending upon your initial assessment.

In cancer check-up, you are given basic blood tests, X-rays and a detailed examination by cancer doctors to rule out any obvious tumor or ulcer process. Depending upon the findings,

further tests might be ordered to clarify any doubts. If your cancer check-up comes normal, that means you do not have any obvious cancer clinically in the common cancer areas of the body. If you are above 50 years of age, you may consider having a medical check-up and cancer check-up. However, cancer is a slow growing process, which takes years to manifest as a visible tumor. One normal cancer check-up will not guarantee that you would be always free of cancer. You would need periodic check-ups, say once every 3 to 5 years. The best thing to prevent cancer, however, is to embark upon a healthy life-style, good nutrition with natural foods that fight cancer, regular exercise, positive mental attitude and above all a feeling of happiness about you, whatever you are.

Q. 32. There is history of cancer in my family. I am worried about cancer. Can I do anything to prevent cancer?

A: Cancer cells have abnormal genes. One could be born with susceptible genes, which are prone to develop cancer later on. This way, there is some increased risk of cancer if one has got many blood relatives with cancer. However, the good news is that most of the times, by avoiding exposure to cancer triggering factors called carcinogens, one can reduce the risk of cancer in spite of having abnormal genes. Healthy life-styles, proper nutrition with cancer fighting foods, regular exercise, good hobbies, positive mental attitude would go further to minimize the cancer risk. Remember, most of the times, your own bad habits have caused increased risk for cancer. Replacing improper habits with good ones will certainly help you prevent cancer. Such precaution might even keep your “faulty genes” from developing cancer. The details of causes of cancer and preventive steps are discussed at length in earlier chapters of this book.

Q.33. I hear a lot about mind-body medicine for cancer. What is it?

A: Mind-Body medicine is a recently coined term but it has been practiced, knowingly or unknowingly, by many complementary alternative medical sciences. Mind is what makes the physical body act. Mind cannot be seen but we know it is somewhere there. Diseases affect both the mind and body. Directing treatment only at pathological disease process, as is usually done by allopathic medicine, might not produce satisfactory results in chronic diseases, which might have deep roots in the emotional/ mental level. Mind- Body medicine advocates attention to both these inseparable components.

Yoga, meditation, visual imagery, biofeedback, reiki, spiritual healing, therapeutic touch etc are some of the techniques used in Mind-Body Medicine. The idea is to strengthen your own mind to improve your immunity, to remove negative feelings and instill healthy emotions to improve your health. Of course, you would also need actual physical therapies for the physical part of your disease process.

Q.34. Does magnet therapy work in cancer?

A: I have not seen magnet therapy alone curing cancer. Application of magnets in a particular way to body parts is supposed to align and energize iron containing organic molecules, especially hemoglobin in the blood. The practitioners of magnet therapies claim various benefits. I personally do not have any experience giving magnet therapy. Therefore I am not in a position to comment, either positively or negatively, about magnet therapy. It is probably harmless and possibly beneficial, if done under guidance of a practitioner having expertise in this area.

Q.35. Why do patients get side reactions of radiation treatments? Is it true that radiation itself is a cause of cancer?

A: Radiation is a beam of ionizing radiation energy that causes a variety of strong biochemical and physical changes in cells. It liberates toxic radicals, which in turn interfere with various normal cell functions. Cancer cell, due to rapid growth, are destroyed by the radiation energy more than the normal cells. After radiation, normal cells recover faster while cancer cells recover slowly, if at all. The toxic radicals as well as the products of cell destruction circulate in the blood and reach different organs. With high doses of radiation, the organs in direct beam of radiation develop reactions like burning, irritability, ulceration and even loss of function. Apart from these local reactions, there are general reactions like loss of appetite, weakness, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, heat etc. These reactions start appearing during the second week of radiation course and continue till end of radiation treatments, after which reactions subside within 4 to 6 weeks. However, some residual changes like hardening of skin, thickening of the part under radiation, reduced blood circulation etc are left for a long period. Some patients have to live with these changes for the rest of the life.

Radiation can cause genetic mutation, which alter the genes. Some of these mutations, if not repaired by the body, could cause cancer after a period of 7 to 10 years. This happens in less

than 5% of the patient undergoing radiation. However, this is a significant risk a patient has to accept for the treatment of his cancer with radiation.

Q. 36. What kind of side effects can happen due to chemotherapy drugs? Is there any way to prevent side effects?

A: Chemotherapy is administration of strong drugs, either by mouth or by injections, to destroy cancer cells. These drugs also destroy normal cells to a lesser extent. Chemotherapy drugs circulate through the whole body and therefore the side reactions are also more wide spread than those in radiotherapy. Loss of appetite, weakness, burning sensation, loss of hair, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sores in mouth, pile like symptoms etc are common side reactions of chemotherapy. Certain drugs produce specific toxicity to heart, lungs, bones, nerves, kidneys etc. That is why chemotherapy is given only by expert oncologist with frequent blood tests to avoid extreme reactions. Like radiation, chemotherapy drugs also can cause mutation in genes, which can possibly cause a cancer later on after a gap of some years.

Good nutrition, liberal supplements of vitamins and minerals, large amounts of liquids etc would reduce incidence of reactions. There are some specific allopathic medicines that your doctor could prescribe to reduce some of these reactions. There are effective medicines in Ayurved and Homeopathy to decrease the severity of side reactions. You should take these medicines with consulting appropriate practitioners.

Q: 37. It is difficult for us to look after our father who is suffering from terminal cancer. Is there any hospital or nursing home we can admit him in?

A: For a terminal cancer patient, when there is no other treatment possible, few special centers called hospices are available. These are routine in the developed nations. In Maharashtra, two such centers are doing wonderful job of making the life less painful and less miserable in the last days of the illness. Shanti Avedana Ashram in Bandra (Mumbai) and Cipla Cancer Aid Foundation, at Warje (Pune). There may be some more centers in other parts of India but I do not have details at present. These centers would help cancer patients and their relatives about the terminal care of cancer patients.

Q.38. My father is very angry in nature. He has developed a stomach cancer. He blames us that we are not taking good care of him. It is very difficult to cope up with him. Any advice?

A: It is very difficult task for relatives to take care of cancer patients, especially the angry ones. These are trying times for all. Patient should look at the cancer as an opportunity to discover new meaning to the life and resolve old conflicts. This is easier said than done. Relatives should learn to be more sympathetic, kind and helpful to the patient at such times. There is no use arguing with your father in this matter at this stage. You cannot change him. With patience and kindness, try to show that you all love him and are ready to do everything possible. Perhaps he is trying to take out his frustration and disappointment with life with the angry spells. His angry nature might have contributed to the development of cancer in the stomach, the organ closely affected by anger and insecurity.

Q.39. My 70 years old mother has developed cancer of throat. She is a very religious, pious and kind personality. She will go out of her way to help anyone in need. We wonder why God is so unjust to punish good persons with diseases like cancer.

A: God's ways are strange. Human mind cannot logically explain many incidences in the world. We do get angry with God when we see a small baby suffering or when an innocent person a victim. In your mother's case, there might be some suppressed emotional conflict or self-neglect in nutritional matters (so common of Indian housewife) that might have triggered the cancer. It could be the genes that underwent spontaneous mutations and caused the cancer. It could be some medicines she took earlier in her life or the injuries, mental and physical, she might have suffered earlier. It is hard to explain. Finally, we can always point our fingers to the FATE!

Q. 40. Why small babies, who never had any bad habits or cancer causing substances like tobacco etc, develop cancer? Is this not a paradox of Divine Justice?

A: In childhood cancer, there is more likely-hood of being born with abnormal cancer prone genes, which express to develop cancer in young age. The genetic mutations could be due to exposure to toxins in the womb of the mother during pregnancy. It could be due to some inherited genetic weakness. It could be even explained as Karma from past lives, if you believe in re-births. It is painful to see an innocent child in pain due to cancer. It is hard to understand divine justice. You can only have faith to be at peace.

Q. 41. What is Wagholi Project of Cancer Research?

A: Guided by Poojya Sardeshmukh Maharaj from Pune, his son Vaidya Sadanand Sardeshmukh and myself developed a protocol for cancer treatment at the Ayurved Hospital and Research Center at Wagholi, about 20 km east of Pune. This project has been running since 1994 and has enrolled more than 1200 cancer patients over the past 7 years. We have seen that Ayurvedic medicines can greatly help to reduce side reactions of cancer treatment, reduce pain and improve general condition of cancer patients. Ayurvedic treatment, which alone may not be able to cure cancer, is used as an addition to conventional cancer treatments as surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Detailed information of this project is given in earlier chapter “Ayurved For Cancer” in this book.

42. Is Bhallatak (Bilawa-Bibwa) good for cancer treatment?

A: Dr. B. G. Wad, a senior physician from Mumbai, did extensive research on use of Bhallatak, an herbal nut used frequently in Ayurved. Dr. Wad found it useful in treatment of certain types of cancers. A product called Anacarcin was developed by Bombay Pharmaceutical Company. This product is no longer available. Recently Ethichem Laboratory in Ahmedabad has come up with Anacarnex, a product made out of Bhallatak. Bhallatak has several properties and can be tried as a complementary treatment.

Q. 43. Can I try Heerak Bhasm (diamond bhasm) for my cancer?

Yes, you could try this under supervision of an expert ayurvedic physician experienced in the use of Heerak Bhasma. Ayurvedic texts have given many properties for Heerak Bhasma and it is possible that this might have some benefit as a complementary treatment. However, I would not rely only upon Heerak Bhasma, if I had a cancer.

Q.44. Should I continue heavy exercise, which I was doing before I was diagnosed of having cancer of bones?

A: If the cancer has affected your bones, you should refrain from any heavy exercise that may put on strain on your bones. Heavy exercise may produce fractures at the site of bone cancer, a very problematic and difficult situation to handle.

Q.45. I am a 15-year-old boy. I fell down from cycle and injured my right knee one year ago. For last few months I am slowly developing a hard painful swelling around the lower part of my right knee. Could this be bone cancer? What should I do?

A: Many times, old injuries leave weakness in the part involved in such injuries. Although apparently the injury heals, the area is at a risk of developing disease later on with minimal provocation or disturbances of dosha. Some chronic diseases are known to occur later on in athletes and boxers who suffer repeated injuries during the professional career. Falling off from the bike is a common incidence in teenagers. Not all the swellings are due to cancer, but it should be investigated. It would be a good idea to take an X-ray of the knees to rule out any serious problem. If there are any doubts, MRI scans can provide much better information than an X-ray film. You should consult an experienced orthopedic surgeon for examination and detailed advice.

Q.46. My 8 years old son suffered a head injury 3 years ago. He had a concussion at that time and was in hospital for 2 days for observation. There was no fracture seen on X rays. Last month he developed continuous headache. A CT scan shows a tumor in the left side of brain. Doctors have advised operation. Can tumors happen due to old injury?

A: Tumors can result from old injuries. Not every head injury results in brain tumor but in a significant number of brain tumors, there is history of old head injury. Brain tumors are commonly benign, which can be cured after surgery. A small number is due to malignant tumor, for which additional treatments might be needed. If your doctors advise operation, you should consider the same for your son.

Q. 49. Is Pancha-karma Ayurvedic treatment good to treat cancer?

A: Pancha-Karma is a part of Ayurvedic treatment that is undertaken to extricate disturbed dosha out of body. It is a sort of body purification method that removes the toxic waste products and dosha, which are at root of a chronic disease process. Pancha-Karma are five fold purification methods, which should be done under proper supervision of an experienced ayurvedic physician.

Q.50. Should the doctors treating cancer worry about the expenditure of the costly cancer therapies?

A: Doctors should be concerned about the possible expenditure of costly therapies. Cost of the current medical treatments and investigations is beyond an average hard-working honest Indian salaried person. Health insurance, to reimburse the hospital bills, has not yet become common in India. Even in advanced countries like USA, a significant number of unemployed people are not able afford a personal health insurance.

A patient should openly ask and the doctor should freely discuss the cost benefit ratio of the long-term expensive medical care in a disease like cancer. Expensive treatments may not necessarily cure cancer. If there is a good chance of controlling the cancer in a patient, you should accept all the treatments you can afford. In advance stage of cancer, there is no use of subjecting the patient to costly treatments, which might prolong the life but by a few months only, unless patients and relatives are keen to go to such extent. At this stage, quality of life, peace and symptomatic pain relief is more important than trial of new radiotherapy or chemotherapy techniques. Relatives wish to do everything possible for the old parents to have all possible treatments regardless of the cost. Do not forget what a parent wishes. Do not force your wishes on the parents or elderly relatives. Respect the wishes of a terminal cancer patient who wants to avoid all those pains, side reactions, tubes and needles all over the body at the end. Sometimes expensive treatments are undertaken out of pressure from the relatives and friends. There might a “guilt complex” associated with saying NO to expensive treatments of doubtful benefits. The matter of the expenses, although a secondary issue, should be given careful thought when the outcome of such treatments is not certain.

Q.51: What is your opinion on Euthanasia (mercy killing)

A: Some medical and social activists in different parts of the world advocate euthanasia by allowing doctors to give large doses of sedatives to terminate life, if terminal patient is in severe pain and discomfort and if he so wishes to die. This is a very controversial topic. Although few European nations have legalized such procedure, laws of most nations do not permit active “mercy killing”. There are various ethical, legal and technical issues involved in euthanasia, which can be misused.

I am against the concept of active euthanasia. However, passive euthanasia, withdrawing all the emergency life support systems, when a patient in misery expresses his consent is acceptable. Withdrawal of all the tubes, needles and respirator support from a patient in emergency ward might hasten the end. This might be preferable, rather than artificially

prolonging life for a short period, from the viewpoint of the patient and relatives. Discussions about such issues should be openly done between relatives and the doctors. A patient can sign in advance a “No Resuscitation Request” to indicate his wish under such circumstances.