

## **PSYCHOLOGY OF CANCER**

Modern medicine is now becoming increasingly aware about the connection between mind and body in health as well as in disease. Symptoms are what a patient expresses about his suffering. Signs are what doctors find on medical examination or by means of medical tests. There may not be a consistent relationship between findings on the reports and patient's perceived suffering. Symptoms may vary greatly for a specific finding on the report. For example, a patient might be experiencing severe chest pains but the chest x-ray and cardiogram may be normal. Conversely, having an abnormal cardiogram and a big spot on chest x-ray, the patient may be without any symptoms. Experience of pain, depression, anxiety, fear etc is mostly subjective feeling.

### **Psychosomatic Illness:**

Psyche means mental make-up, emotional profile. Soma means physical body. Psychosomatic illnesses express suffering on both levels. One cannot separate body from mind. Both are interconnected. If mind suffers, it would express in some physical illness. Physical disease can make mind fearful, depressed and anxious. It is difficult to decide whether an illness first starts in body and affects the mind later on, or whether it is the mental suffering that is reflected in the physical disease process. It would be safer to assume that any illness is the mixture of disturbance of the mind and the body, although the severity of mental and physical components could vary greatly. In psychosomatic illness, mind plays primary role in causation of physical disease. Disease affects whole person who has the mind as well as the body. Unless the mind and body are attended, the disease would not be controlled.

During my practice, I came across many cancer patients where I noticed unusual emotional distress. Later on, I realized that a majority of the patients had some emotional stresses. Cancer is not a psychological disease. However, many times there is undercurrent of mental distress due to unresolved conflicts. If doctors could search and try to help such issues, management of the disease becomes easier.

Giving adequate time to a patient and make him feel free to talk is the most important initial step. A sympathetic doctor, who can wisely spare adequate time to listen to the patient, wins half the battle even before actual treatment starts. Such doctors comprehend much more about the disease process than from mere recording of test findings, routine history and medical examination. “Look and thou shall find” is the famous saying from the Holy Bible. When a patient trusts the doctor, he will, knowingly or unknowingly, give a lot of helpful information about himself and about his disease.

Painful life events often trigger diseases, even a cancer process. Cancer is usually a disease of old age, by which time a man or woman has faced various stressful situations in life. Death of spouse, sudden death of a loved one, loss of job, retirement, financial ruins, rejection by own children or relatives, insults, worries about future of children are some practical problems, which create a lot of anxiety. Many people resolve the mental turmoil associated with such events. However, not everyone can cope up with such situation and such persons might express the mental suffering on a physical level in the form of a disease. Sometimes physical disease provides a subconscious escape route. Many life situations are practically hard to cope with while some others may be painful on subjective level. Many persons get delusions, illusions and distorted perceptions of situations, which may not have a realistic basis. The perceptions, however, are very real for the person who is experiencing such emotions and mental images.

It is my observation that homeopathic remedies work very well on many emotional problems and stressful situations. Homeopathy is a vast science. Chapters on “Mind” in homeopathy deal with various mental problems, which may be root causes of many illnesses. Homeopathy is a type of energy medicine. A homeopathic remedy may not have any actual material molecule to explain its’ action on physical level but such a remedy carries an energy signature, a latent vibration, which might bring about the desired effect on the mental and physical levels. This chapter gives true stories of some of my cancer patients where we found significant interplay between mind and body. Treating the mind helped greatly in relief of symptoms. I do not suggest that homeopathy cures cancer. I know that homeopathic remedies can help greatly for symptomatic relief in certain psychosomatic situations. I will discuss my views on homeopathy for cancer in a later chapter.

This chapter gives some actual case histories. The names of the patients have been changed for the sake of confidentiality. All these patients were receiving conventional cancer therapy at Bombay Hospital in Mumbai. Homeopathic remedies were used only as a supplemental therapy after taking the consent from the patient or the relatives. During history taking, each patient was encouraged to come out with all his physical problems, emotional stress and painful life events if any. It was amazing to notice that given the sympathetic hearing and ample time, most of the patients could come out with significant incidents and peculiar feelings. After careful analysis of these symptoms by our homeopathic colleagues, appropriate remedies were quickly found with the help of a homeopathic software computer program. Selected remedies were given to the patients, who showed unusually rapid symptomatic improvement for each particular problem.

**Case No. 1:**

Vijaya, a 35 years old female patient developed headaches, vertigo, loss of appetite, drowsiness and stupor progressive over the previous 6 months. The patient was diagnosed to have Glioma of right thalamus, a brain tumor at the base of brain. The malignant nature of the tumor was confirmed by biopsy. The tumor, due to its' critical location could not be removed by operation. The patient was referred to me for radiation treatment, which was started on Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1993. She had persistent headaches and the speech was disturbed. She did not show signs of improvement under radiation treatments.

Homeopathic assessment was done after two weeks. Patient was unmarried. She had an angry and haughty nature. She had developed headaches soon after her mother died in December 1992. In September 1993, 9 months after her mother's death, she was diagnosed to have brain tumor seen on CT scan. Considering the totality of symptoms, Staphysagria-30 C was administered the homeopathic remedy. Within the next two weeks, there was more than 75% decrease in her headache, her speech improved markedly and her angry spells reduced markedly, as noticed by her relatives at home.

**Case No. 2:**

D.P. a 60-year-old male patient, who was a shopkeeper, was diagnosed to have prostate cancer in May 1991. This was treated with local radiation in an outside hospital in May/ June 1991. Patient responded well to this treatment and was free of pain till June 1993, when he suddenly developed severe pain in back and knees. He also complained of loss of weight, loss

of appetite and he was depressed. The cancer had spread to bones as seen on bone scan. Hormone and chemotherapy did not help. Pain got worse in Oct. 1993, when he was referred to us at Bombay Hospital for radiation treatment for pain relief. His pain was not relieved in the first 2 weeks of radiation treatments.

During a personal conversation, when asked about his family, he almost broke down and said that his married daughter was murdered by a household servant in January 1993, after which he started getting backache and knee pains. Homeopathic assessment pointed to Ignatia 30 C, which was given mid-way during radiotherapy course. Within one week of getting Ignatia, patient showed more than 50% relief in pain and other symptoms.

**Case No. 3:**

This 69-year-old government officer had retired 10 years ago. He was doing part time consulting work. He slowly developed backache in 1991, which became worse and lead to severe sciatica type pain in Sept. 1993. Investigations at this time revealed a cancer tumor in lung, which has spread to bones in lower spine, pelvis and left hip. Unable to turn in bed, he was miserable with pain. He was referred to me for radiation treatment for pain relief.

Homeopathic history revealed that this man was active, cheerful and enjoyed his consulting work till sudden accidental death of his married son in a car accident in 1990. Patient's illness started after this incident. He was also anxious about his wife, who had some chronic health problems. Radiotherapy was started in Oct. 1993. Simultaneously, he was given Ignatia 30-C, a homeopathic remedy for grief reaction. There was dramatic return of cheerfulness within 4 days. His sadness decreased greatly. The backache, although still present, did not seem to bother him much.

**Case No. 4:**

Shabana, a 12 years old girl, had undergone partial removal of her brain tumor, parietal lobe astrocytoma, in August 1993. She was referred to me for post-operative radiotherapy, which was started on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1993. She was depressed, fearful and complained of frequent headaches.

During a personal talk, Shabana disclosed that she was seeing a fierce looking black fakir following her on and off. She was greatly afraid of this man following her. She was getting scared and used to scream in sleep. This was a delusion well documented in homeopathic

repertory. Stramonium 30-C s given to her on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 1993, resulted in excellent improvement within one week. She became cheerful and headaches had gone. With a smile on her face, she told me in confidence that the black fakir had left chasing her.

**Case No. 5:**

Madhu, an eight-year-old little rowdy girl, developed sudden double vision, loss of balance and shaking of hands in August 1993. A CT scan revealed a tumor in the brain stem, which could not be operated because of its' critical location. Radiotherapy was started in Sept. 1993. This girl was uncooperative, crying, screaming and restless. She used to throw temper tantrums.

Personal talk to her revealed that she lived outside Bombay and was brought to Bombay for medical treatment. She was homesick and irritable. She wept often when anything was refused to her. She told that she dreamt of ghosts often. Belladonna 30 was given as the chosen homeopathic remedy on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept 1993. On medical check up 2 weeks later, she was found to be cheerful and smiling. Her gait and coordination had improved greatly. She could now walk on her own without any support from others. She told that the ghost had almost stopped her visiting in dreams and anyway she was no longer scared of the ghosts!

Case number 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate unresolved grief reaction at the basis of physical suffering. Case number 4 and 5 reveal that delusions, fear of being persecuted and frightful visions play a significant role in the symptoms. There are many more cases on our record where such approach has worked well. Successfully addressing emotional turmoil goes a long way in the management of cancer. Homeopathy is able to play a significant complementary role in relieving underlying emotional disturbances.