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Mederi Center Breast Cancer Study

The goal of this study, conducted by Kathryn Niemeyer PhD, MSc, FNP-BC, was to evaluate whole-person effects of a whole systems integrative health approach for women with breast cancer. It was proposed that persons with breast cancer will experience whole-person wellbeing and symptom management to a greater extent with sustained use of a whole systems integrative treatment approach than prior to engaging the use of a whole systems approach.

Subjects/participants in this study were women with different stages, grades, and types of breast cancer with 42% over age 66, 54% age 46-65, and 3% under age 46. Sixty-seven percent were married, while 95% were college educated, and 88% were employed or retired. Ninety-three percent of the women have been involved in integrative cancer care for over 1 year with 39% of those being involved over 5 years. Eighty-three percent of the women consistently followed the integrative health protocol recommendations for 75-100% of the time. Subjects lived in 14 different states representing all US regions (West, Southwest, Southeast, Midwest, Northeast). All subjects/participants were patients at Mederi Center in Ashland OR.

Mederi Center offers whole-person integrative care that focuses on botanical, nutritional, dietary, and lifestyle medicines that are individually constructed treatment protocols fit to each person's unique biopsychosocial-spiritual and energetic landscape, cancer/tumor landscape, and the environment of interaction. This integrative approach addresses the personal unitary experience of cancer. The intent is to synergize the integrative treatment components and complement conventional cancer and pharmaceutical treatments in order to increase efficiency.

For the first phase of this study, 33 persons completed a demographic questionnaire and the Self-Assessment of Change (SAC) and the Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile 2 (MYMOP2) surveys. The validated surveys were used to evaluate perceived meaningful whole-person changes with participation in a personalized integrative health program. For the second phase, 24 persons were interviewed for approximately one hour each with open-ended questions to explore the subjective experiences of persons choosing to use integrative health while living with breast cancer. The third phase was an ongoing review of subjects' written records at the integrative health clinic for the purpose of assessing additional qualitative inputs and potential disease progression issues. All subjects/participants met inclusion criteria and signed informed consent.

Survey data were analyzed using Excel (Microsoft Corp. Redmond, WA). All subjects reported changes in their whole-person lived experiences of breast cancer while engaging in a personalized integrative health approach. Changes were expressed as "before" to "now" in 16-word pairs addressing physical, cognitive, spiritual, emotional, social, and whole-person health. Differences in mean scores from 'before' to 'now' were the highest with the word pairs: overwhelmed – empowered, hopeless – hopeful, and anxious – calm. Differences in mean



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change scores was the least with the word pairs: closed hearted – open hearted, blaming – forgiving, and body does not recover quickly – recovers quickly. Physical health measures showed the greatest change in sleep and whole-person health items showed the greatest changes in empowerment and anxiety. For the data from the MYMOP2 scale, all symptoms as individually stated by each subject showed changes in mean scores from 'before' to 'now'. Likewise, activity and wellbeing demonstrated change from 'before' to 'now'. In summary, with mean change scores of >10 indicating minimal meaningful clinical change for the SAC items, all items demonstrated meaningful clinical change.

Summary

Exploration of treatment experiences, quality of life, and symptom changes in persons with breast cancer undergoing integrative treatments.

- This was a small descriptive study that used triangulation of data to explore the effects of the Mederi integrative health treatment on breast cancer patients.
- A convenience sample of 33 persons completed the Self-Assessment of Change (SAC) and Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (MYMOP 2) questionnaires.
- Twenty-four of the 33 persons were then interviewed for qualitative responses and contextual input on their experiences with integrative health for breast cancer.
- In addition, 33 medical records were reviewed during the study for qualitative responses provided during treatment and for symptom/biological monitoring. Findings for the SAC showed positive change (from before treatment to now) in all the whole person quality of life parameters.
- The greatest change was from feeling overwhelmed to empowered, hopeless to hopeful and in the physical domain, the greatest change was for sleep. Subjects reported being treated for symptoms categorized into 14 different categories with mental and cognitive concerns (foggy thinking, mental acuity, anxiety, uncertainty) being the most frequent.
- Both activity and wellbeing showed improvement from before Mederi to the current time. The qualitative (interview) data were grouped according to categories then themes.
- Themes which were recurrent and interwoven through the data included: seeing with a different lens, moving from fear to a place of strength and hope, healing as unfolding, opening, and expanding consciousness, and the relationship path as an essential route to healing.
- Little research has been done on integrative health programs that prescribe individualized whole person treatments consisting of botanicals, nutraceuticals, and nutrition along with life style changes.
- This study was the first study of its kind to look at outcomes to Mederi treatments.
- It kept the voice of the Mederi patient central and in the forefront.
- While we see multiplicity in cancers, cancer treatments and responses, there was uniformity in the forward and positive personal changes and transformations expressed by these patients.

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