

DIET & CANCER: PREVENTION OR CURE?

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(originally published in *The Windham Independent*)

When clients with cancer come to see me it is interesting to hear their various reports of nutritional advice received from well-meaning friends, relatives, and even dieticians. Basically, the advice boils down to a general, healthy-sounding pablum... “eat fresh foods, lots of fruits, vegetables...” Wow. Wish it were that simple!

Even more common, however, is the idea that cancer patients have no appetite so whatever they feel like eating, they should eat; after all, it’s better than nothing! I first encountered this mindset many years ago at a local hospital, where I had been invited to give a presentation regarding nutrition and cancer. The session was preceded by a luncheon, and I have to admit that I was shocked when I saw several different renditions of kielbasa on the buffet table, among other dishes similar in processed food content and lack of, well... *color and vitality!*

Due to the vague generalizations that surround this issue, many people with cancer are at a complete loss when it comes to knowing what they really should be eating. Most are completely unaware that a well-planned dietary strategy could actually be an important part of their treatment, in many cases significantly impacting their success at getting well. Still, less realized is the important fact that the anti-cancer diet and the cancer-killing diet are in some ways completely different; what might be keeping your healthy cells healthy when you do not have cancer just might be keeping your cancer cells “fat n’ sassy” when you do!

For example, one of the “root” anti-aging strategies I use with virtually everyone involves optimizing the production of cellular energy, known as adenosine triphosphate (ATP). Around the age of 30, due in part to the simultaneous decline in DHEA levels (a prohormone produced in the adrenal glands), we begin to make less ATP. ATP is what is produced during the Krebs cycle, as essential fatty acids are drawn across the mitochondria of our cells, producing energy and enabling all of our cells to respire optimally. Some of the many benefits of having adequate cellular energy include being able to use dietary protein to make muscle, keeping all organ systems functioning youthfully, from the thyroid – better able to take up iodine – to protecting brain health... to name just a few. Regarding cancer, however, when ATP levels are where they should be, our cells are much less susceptible to genetic mutation (i.e., cancer).

Some of the nutrients that are used in a cancer-prevention strategy include those that boost ATP production. The list is pretty stellar – including but not limited to – Co-Q10, various forms of l-carnitine, NAD, lipoic acid, alpha-ketoglutarate, creatine monophosphate, and the B vitamins riboflavin (B2) and niacinamide (non-flushing form of B3). Wouldn’t you think that if boosting ATP can help prevent cancer it would be a great strategy for getting rid of cancer? Me too!... but... **WRONG!**

For our purposes here, picture a cancerous tumor as a clump of cells stuck together, a few of them beaming a fiery light. We'll call these the MDR-cells, which stands for "multi-drug-resistant" cells. Each cancerous tumor develops these, and the longer the tumor survives the more of them there are within the tumor mass. Each of these MDR-cells house a very powerful pumping system. The job of this pumping system is to pump out of the tumor just as fast as it can any cancer-killing agent targeted against it. This could be a chemotherapeutic agent of mainstream pharmaceutical origin or from more natural sources. Again, as the tumor is defended from agents set against it, more and more of the cancer cells within the mass become MDR-cells. Just like in a computer game where losing becomes more and more certain as the game progresses and you just aren't clever enough, so losing the battle against cancer growth becomes more and more certain as more of the cells become pumping machines.

The MDR-cells, however, do have an Achilles' Heel, so to speak, and that is the fact that the pumping system they contain requires vast amounts of cellular energy, or ATP. Is there something we can do about that? Yes! Graviola is one of the plants I use to turn off cellular energy *selectively* to cancer cells. Graviola has other cancer-killing properties, as well, but if a person supplements with ATP-boosting nutrients at the same time the feature of shutting down the energy supply to the MDR-cells is deactivated. In light of this scenario, while we would recommend supplementation with Co-Q10 for a person without cancer, we would not want to recommend the use of Co-Q10 or any other ATP-boosting nutrients for the person *with* cancer. Does this make sense?

I recently referred a gentleman with chronic lymphocytic leukemia to the A. P. John Institute in Greenwich, Connecticut, to take advantage of their cancer-killing CAAT (Controlled Amino Acid Consumption) diet. This diet focuses on depriving the cancer cells of sugar by limiting carbohydrate consumption to 20 % of daily calories (cancer thrives on sugar), removing certain key amino acids from the diet, keeping vitamin B6 and phosphorous out of the diet. This diet is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a cancer-*preventive* diet, but it is a very effective cancer-*killing* diet, and it can be used safely in conjunction with conventional treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation.

I know it seems that lots of our nutritional and health information these days is contradictory and perplexing. The good news amidst all of the confusion is that whether you want to prevent the occurrence of cancer in the first place or get rid of cancer that already exists, a strategic dietary approach based on science and an informed understanding of that science can make a world of difference!

Keep your eyes tuned... my next piece will include some fascinating and doable dietary tactics for killing cancer cells. Using several will attack them in different ways at the same time. Some of these will astound you with their simplicity and affordability, but all will impress you with their track records. For the one who has "ears to hear..."

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