



YOUR PRACTICE

## Helping Cancer Survivors, Part 1: Why They Need You

Dylan Foster, DC, PScD, CFMP, ONC

Do you have patients in your practice who have endured radiation and/or chemotherapy, only to find they now suffer from new problems arising from the cancer therapy? Would you like to be able to help them? You can.

One in two men and one in three women will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 2 million people will get cancer in 2020; that's a cancer diagnosis about every 23 seconds! And 606,520 people will die from cancer in 2020 - one cancer death approximately every 52 seconds. With statistics like these, I'm guessing you have many patients, friends or family members who are already classified as cancer survivors.

### The Missing Element in Cancer Care (and Recovery)

The problem for cancer patients is that most oncologists have little to no training in nutrition,<sup>2</sup> rarely address nutrition and from my experience, some even tell their patients nutrition does not matter. Patients are told to "just eat healthy." But what does that actually mean?

Worse yet, I have had many patients who were told by their oncologist, "Just eat what you want, diet doesn't matter." Hopefully, I am preaching to the choir here and this makes you as angry as it makes me. We chiropractors know just how important diet is to our health, let alone to someone recently diagnosed and treated for cancer.



Because chiropractors are often known in the community as doctors who help people achieve better health and feel better, naturally, many cancer survivors have come to me (and other chiropractors I know) for help. Some of us know what to do, while others aren't really sure how to help.

I know we all got into this profession to help people, so let's discuss some simple steps we can take to help our cancer-surviving patients feel better again. But, before I do, I need to offer a little background as to why many of these cancer survivors feel so bad in the first place.

### The Reality of Cancer Therapy

I'm sure you are all well-aware of the toxicity and dangers of radiation and chemotherapy. Some of you may agree with it, while most of you are probably against it. Either way, it is a common reality as a standard-of-care procedure most cancer patients follow through with. Unfortunately, these procedures can leave the patient feeling terrible during, and even after. Symptoms include exhaustion, foggy head, and pain, to name a few.

When patients are treated with radiation or chemotherapy protocols, they are exposed to an enormous amount of reactive oxygen species (ROS) or free-radical damage. This is pretty much on purpose, since the intention of the treatment is to kill off as many cancer cells as possible. Unfortunately, no distinction is made between cancerous and healthy cells; therefore, all cells, DNA and RNA, are destroyed.

### Four Reasons Cancer Survivors Continue to Suffer

From all my years of training and research, I have found only four main causes as to why a cancer survivor still feels bad after going through radiation or chemotherapy. By properly addressing these four causes, I have been able to get each and every one of them feeling great again:

1. *Mitochondrial dysfunction*:<sup>3</sup> The body tries to heal and repair itself through what we refer to as "the power that made the body, heals the body" - by using up as much of its energy as it can. This mitochondrial ATP energy can become deficient, leading to mitochondrial dysfunction, which then leads to a potential array of many other health, mental and physical issues. Without proper mitochondrial function, no cell, organ, tissue or gland can function properly. Energy is needed for every cellular process in our body, not just physical energy.

2. *Inflammation*:<sup>4</sup> A cancer patient usually already has a large amount of inflammation within their body. Adding radiation and chemotherapy to the mix increases that inflammation even more. As chiropractors, we are all aware of the dangers and damage that stems from chronic inflammation.

3. *Free-radical damage*:<sup>5</sup> Radiation and chemotherapy both contribute to this free-radical damage / ROS / oxidative stress, which causes macromolecular damage and is implicated in various disease states such as atherosclerosis, diabetes, cancer, neurodegeneration and aging. To add insult to injury, you can't have proper mitochondrial function if you have oxidative stress taking place, and you can't repair oxidative stress if you have mitochondrial dysfunction. It's a vicious cycle.

4. *Toxic burden*: The real problem isn't how toxic radiation and chemotherapy are, or the fact that they can't isolate cancerous cells and thus have to kill both healthy and cancerous cells. The problem is that these toxins can stay within our bodies for the rest of our lives. This toxic burden can lead to more mitochondrial dysfunction and free-radical damage, which can keep someone from truly being able to heal.

*Editor's Note*: In part 2 of this article (October issue), Dr. Foster presents a seven-step protocol to help your current and future cancer-surviving patients truly heal.

## References

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