

Education is Key to Curing the Whole Body

By Esther Hughes



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Webster's describes cancer as "a malignant tumor that tends to spread through the body; a malignant evil that corrodes slowly and fatally." With that kind of definition, it is no wonder that individuals diagnosed with cancer feel like a frightening black hole is engulfing them. Because of fear and worry, many people do not seek further medical opinions where they may gain a broader understanding of the disease. Consequently they may not be fully equipped to battle for their life. This is where the importance of becoming educated is imperative when putting a medical team in place. An educated patient is a fighting agent against cancer. One avenue to research is through wellness and holistic healing.

For many years patients were treated through surgery and medicine alone, but in recent decades an emergence of treating the whole person has reappeared. Throughout the health community a centuries-old concept of establishing wellness in individuals through holistic measures is gaining modern attention. Suzan Walter, president of the American Holistic Health Association describes holistic in this way, "Holistic as a whole made up

of interdependent parts. 1) the mind/body connection, 2) mind/body/spirit or 3) physical/mental/emotional/spiritual aspects." When someone is dealing with an illness such as cancer, Ms. Walter focuses on "increasing patient involvement, and considering both conventional and complementary therapies."

For cancer patients, it may be beneficial to find doctors who not only provide traditional medical treatment, but also doctors who practice holistic methods of wellness. Combining the two approaches may give a patient the best of both worlds. When encountering a life-threatening illness, it is worth the extra effort to investigate all factions of medicine and healing.

Hospitals and Medical Centers are developing holistic centers to integrate the medical and holistic approaches in one setting. In South Jersey, Virtua Health System offers holistic services to its patients. Their web site states, "Virtua has developed services and programs that complement traditional healthcare by bringing about an understanding of the relationship between the mind and body."

Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center has a wellness center that was established in 1979 and has been growing ever since in its ability to treat the whole patient through "the spiritual component of wellness." Another such hospital is St. Mary Medical Center in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. This hospital has introduced a Holistic Center and Comprehensive Care Program with a mission that

states, "This novel approach blends the most sophisticated medical resources with centuries-old healing therapies to manage more completely the needs and interests of our patients."

Many doctors and surgeons recognize that healing doesn't occur with surgery and treatment alone, but it starts within the person. Beth DuPree, MD, FACS, General Surgeon and holistic practitioner at St. Mary Medical Center has been treating patients for 10 years. She states, "My patients and I are equal partners in the healing process. We empower each other toward survival. I tried to practice typical medical standards through surgery alone, but found that my patients were not being treated wholly." Because of her unrest with the situation, she switched the focus of her practice by promoting the body's ability to heal itself through forms of meditation and positive thinking. Dr. DuPree believes that using the wellness approach together with surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, gives her patients a better approach to life and greater success with survival. She also reminds her patients that every day is a gift.

The Holistic Center at St. Mary's believes that "Health is influenced by physical mental, emotional and spiritual issues, and treating the whole person is essential to stimulating the healing process." I believe that faith in action, through prayer and meditation, took the spotlight off my cancer and brought the focus into a condition of the heart and soul. Through God's presence in my life,

healing began in my mind before it began in my body because I abdicated the worry factor and instituted the trust factor. Trust that God was in control and I was not. Faith played a significant role in my healing process by giving me a positive outlook and strength to endure the treatments.

Throughout the war to defeat the 'malignant evil' in a person's body there is always the knowledge that the disease is there. Wellness through holistic approaches helps reduce the paralyzing fear in an individual with a life-threatening illness. A person with cancer knows that every day is worth the fight. As unbelievable as it may sound, I am thankful that I had cancer because it gave me a second chance to appreciate life from a new perspective. Every morning my first prayer is one of thanksgiving to God for giving me another day with my three children and my husband. Every day is a gift to be opened carefully, used wisely, and treasured dearly.

Some Measures of Holistic Wellness Are:

- **Spiritual Venues** (i.e. prayer, meditation, inspirational music, etc.)
- **Massage Therapy**
- **Stress Management**
- **Exercise**
- **Nutrition**

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