



Integrative Medicine, Complimentary Therapies, and Chinese Medicine and Lung Cancer Patient Panel

[Lorren] Well, welcome back everybody, thank you so much for joining us for the Caring Ambassadors Program video series Learned from the Experts. This is part three in our series on Integrative Medicine, Complimentary Therapies, and Chinese Medicine and Lung Cancer. I'm Lorren Sandt, the Executive Director of the Caring Ambassadors Program, and I'm joined today by Cindy Langhorne-Hatfield, our Lung Cancer Program Director, and a panel of people living with lung cancer and their caregivers. We are excited to welcome back Misha Cohen a licensed acupuncture doctor of Oriental medicine from San Francisco, California. In this session Misha will be answering questions from patients about their concerns with living with lung cancer. We hope the video will provide helpful insights and that you will share this with other people living with lung cancer. Welcome back Misha and welcome back to the panel.

Chris, you want to kick us off?

[Chris] Sure, Hi Misha thank you so much for that great introduction. When I'm looking to build my team, as a caregiver, what do we what's the terminology we use when we're looking for, is it an Innovative oncologist? And if so, when would I ask to bring that person in to support our care?

[Misha] That's a great question, there's a whole area called integrative oncology and there are a number of doctors in the United States who practice integrative oncology. Interestingly enough, some doctors only practice integrative oncology,

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give consultations to people, help them to coordinate their care with other practitioners; and then there are some doctors who are treating oncologists who also use Integrative Medicine integrative therapies as part of their practice. They're kind of different, you know, so there are some practitioners of Western medicine who are not going to be treating you specifically for cancer and who are we're not going to be giving you chemo or immunotherapy, radiation treatments, but they can help you to coordinate that or help you with sending you to other practitioners such as acupuncturists, or herbal doctors, etc. Each area is different, you know often these, the integrative oncologists are often associated with large Universities at this point in the United States. However, there are people, a number of really highly successful great practices of people who are integrative oncologists who work outside of the hospital systems as well. So much is going to depend on where you are and what situation you're in whether you would seek out integrative oncology. I would suggest doing it very early in the process so that you would be able to have someone who can help you with dietary therapy, help direct you towards acupuncture, help direct you towards other therapies. Now, one thing is most integrative oncologists are not herbal medicine people per se, Chinese herbal medicine or acupuncturist in themselves, so you would need to look elsewhere for that. Now they could help you to find somebody and, in some cases, they could help coordinate it; but oftentimes if you're working with a Chinese herbal doctor who knows a lot about cancer treatment they are going to know much more than an integrative oncologist and be able to help you with that. One of the things I didn't talk about in the session a little bit was interactions in terms of the Chinese herbal doctor believe but we have programs that we can look at that help us to determine interactions between drugs and herbs. I know that pharmacists can do that as well however, we use a very specific professional program that is updated every day. What we don't use is go look at books that are 5 years old to look at interactions and one of the things is when you are seeking out a Chinese herbal practitioner, or a doctor of Chinese medicine, or Asian medicine, you want to know that that person is going to be very serious about the use of interaction programs and understand that very carefully because often times if you send somebody back to their Western doctor, going to say I don't know anything about this, you can't use it. What I would say was one, well maybe learn a little bit more, but two, you don't need to know everything. You send somebody back to the practitioner who knows a lot and have them get you a

report. And so, I provide reports to the patient to be able to provide to the oncologist. So, I think this is all kind of related to your question. Because I think creating a team that may have different aspects in the team that you might need and they won't necessarily all be in the same place, you know, so that would be something that you would have to coordinate and sometimes I will help people coordinate their treatments. They don't have an integrative oncologist and I will act in some role as helping to coordinate the treatments among people. I obviously; I'm not going to be doing the chemotherapy or immunotherapy, your radiation, but I can help them to ask the right questions to their doctors and that's one of the things that you want somebody who's going to be able to help you to do that as well. Hopefully that answers your question.

[Chris] Misha can I just follow up real quick? I know there's some questions about when folks are on clinical trials what is safe for them to do during a clinical trial because they don't want to get kicked out of the clinical trial. What would you recommend in something like that?

[Misha] Oh I always tell people that ask the clinical trial directors what they can and can't do, that's my position. I think it's important that if somebody's in a clinical trial that they disclose everything that they are doing and sometimes in the clinical trial, depending on the trial, they are continued to allow to use herbal medicine and acupuncture, in some clinical trials, or most clinical trials. People can't use anything else, you know, other than what's in the clinical trial so that depends on the particular study.

[Lynn] You had mentioned that herbal medicines may ease the symptoms of chemo and radiation, but they may interfere with targeted medicines. Some of them are really simple herbs, like turmeric, would interfere with my targeted medicine if I used and some people you know just try this on their own, you know. How do we know actually to look? I understand when you're involved you check it out but that's not always the case.

[Misha] I do not recommend people use herbal medicine without guidance, that's my bottom line. I think that there needs to be guidance from somebody who knows the herbal medicine and is able to help with the interactions. Interactions are really complicated, so much is going to depend on the course of the treatment. Let's say you have a chemotherapy that you are using every 3 weeks

and you know when the treatment is, and you know exact how long basically the treatment is working for, some of the things that we do is we will move the herbal medicine away from the time of the treatment, and use herbal medicine later in the course; and then stop it again before the infusions. You know sometimes that's not helpful, because time that the either the Western treatment, or the herbal treatment's working, is too long to be able to do that. One of the things I do is when I'm looking at interactions, I look at the studies that have been done specifically on that herb and the particular drug that's being used and say, hey look, you know and you're right, turmeric is problematic for a lot of you know so that would be something that I might may or may not give to somebody. But if I'm going to do it for example, I use a formula called Zyflamend that has turmeric in it, but I would have to move that away from the active treatment times for somebody. I'm not going to do this on my own. I'm going to provide this to the oncologist to look at so we're sharing some of the responsibility for how we do this together. Because you know I can't know everything. One of the things that's kind of interesting is that while there's a lot that is known about interactions, most of the interactions are what we call a Level D, which is not clinical trials, not based on anything other than maybe a possibility that there's an interaction it might be helpful, it might be destructive, and we have to look at that; and sometimes when we look at the interactions we'll see that it's a class of drugs that's associated with a class of herbs, but it's not that specific drug and herb that has been found to have the interaction. You know there's a lot of times at the very bottom of the interaction, say well in this case, it could increase the uptake of the drug, and another case it might decrease the uptake of the drug, it's complicated in that way. But, you know there's also a lot of guess work done with chemotherapy and immunotherapy. Many of the treatments that are being done in Western medicine are being done by the experience of the practitioner, not necessarily from a study, even though they've been studied, they may not be studied for your particular situation. They may be used off label Etc. So many questions in there. I know I kind of open up a little bit of a can of worms there but it's how I think about these things a lot.

[Lynn] To follow up on something you just said, for us as people living with cancer, the bottom-line coordinator is our oncologist is that what you're saying?

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[Misha] Yeah, or the oncology team, sometimes it's a pharmacist. It's interesting to me, a lot of times the pharmacists are much more open to the use of herbal medicine because they actually understand it much more, and understand the interactions much more. So if you could actually have a pharmacist be involved, some of the centers that we are working with they'll send everything to the pharmacist, before even looking because the oncologist doesn't often know.

[Lynn] I've read the book on your Lung Cancer Choices and in the chapter on nutrition under good snacks it really recommends raw and uncooked foods, but you're kind of hedging on that and you know saying well maybe the better way to go is a cooked food. Does it really matter?

[Misha] I think it makes a big difference actually. I think people's digestion works much better when foods are cooked. Basically, Chinese medicine has understood for centuries that when we cook foods we actually don't have to heat them up in our stomach to cook them; so I know that sounds funny, but that's basically the case. I'd have to read that chapter. I haven't read it in a long time, but I think there's very different philosophies about nutrition in the West than there are in the East. But one of the things is I use a combination of Eastern and Western nutritional therapies all the time and I see the difference in people who have been eating raw diets and then change to a mainly cooked diet. You can eat some raw foods you know, it's not that you can't eat any, but we don't want people eating cold foods, or raw foods. As actually you can feel the difference in the digestion and it changes bowel movements. It changes a lot of things about what happens for an individual. I know there's a lot of details in that but one of the things that's important is that there's a number of studies that have shown that cooking foods lightly does not decrease their enzymatic content. That's kind of the, I think the biggest thing, that is said by raw foods advocates.

[Chris] What would you recommend as far as when we get into meeting with our oncologists to try to get them to more grasp the concept of Western medicine and working together; and when I mean how can we, I mean caregivers, survivors; what is the best approach you recommend to get them more on board with this, also as a corresponding, or complimentary treatment, when you're trying to get your holistic plan, how can we do that?

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[Misha] Well that's a an intricate question. I think it partially depends on who your practitioners of Chinese medicine or in Integrative Medicine are and how you can present that to your oncologist, because an oncologist is going to want to know how safe is this, you know, are they telling you that they're going to cure your cancer, are they telling you that this is the only thing you can do, are they telling you that you can take anything you want, you know, they're going to ask those kind of questions. So you want to be able to know your practitioners responses, or even ask, say, hey look you have these questions let's get you two together and talk to each other, that's not always possible. But sometimes you can talk with the a nurse case manager, so I think that there is an oncology team normally and it includes the case management. I think that would be an area that you could look at. I think it's important because one of the things that happens a lot is that an oncologist will say, hey I don't want you to take any Chinese herbs, there could be problems with them. I understand that and I think that is true and it's a problem. There's supplements that are a problem, there's all kinds of things that are problems for somebody to take who is going through cancer treatment. It's important the oncologists understand how the practitioner practices that you are working with. One of the things that's happened for me is that when there's a patient talking with an oncologist and tells them that what we are doing, and how we are doing our practice, in using interactions, and looking all that, that they're going to provide all of the information to the oncologist beforehand, that we are using certified formulas Etc. Because part of the problem is that people go, you know, will go to the store and pick up Chinese herbs and just start taking them. That's something the oncologist does not want you to do, and I don't want you to do either. And, sometimes you'll have people who are practitioners who really don't understand how to look at those interactions; and how to look at when to use the herbs, and not. And you so that's going to be on you to understand your practitioner and how your practitioner practices. I hope that's a helpful answer.

[Chris] It is thank you. I appreciate that.

[Marla] You keep saying chemo but is immunotherapy kind of contraindicated with this Chinese herbal stuff, acupuncture especially? I had big major reactions to immunotherapy, granted I was on it for two years when I had it and it was the

second one, I was on; but has it been studied, I mean then that's kind of like my second question, is that when you say that this herbal helps this, and this acupuncture helps this? Are there studies on this, reproducible, scientific studies, or is this all like experienced hearsay, anecdotal stuff? And then the immunotherapy, how do you know that that's not working with it, or is it just immunotherapy is too new that you don't have answers yet? So it's kind of two questions.

[Misha] There's a lot of acupuncture studies that have been done. Herbal medicine is very different. Herbal medicine has primarily been studied in China and is used regularly in China in conjunction with all cancer therapies, including immunotherapy. So there have been studies that have looked at in the interactions between immunotherapy and herbs but they're primarily studies that are not clinical studies they're going to be studies in animals and theoretical contraindications or support. So that's going to be more difficult, to use. That's why I'm really, really, careful with people with immunotherapy because we don't have as much information about it. We oftentimes do not give people herbs who are on immunotherapy until they finish treatment, if they finish treatment.

[Marla] (*my doctor said*) you can have anything you want, do anything you want, they really didn't think I was going to live past a year; none of my doctors even the doctors I worked with. So he said, well, between you and me we're doing something right so whatever you want is yours.

[Misha] Yeah and that's the other side is that there's people who have issues with you know marrow problems and things like that. We want to use Herbal formulas to really support them because especially if they're told hey you have a stage 4 cancer, you're going to be gone, and blah blah blah blah and hey look you know I'm here, I'm still here, you know three years later and I'm going to keep doing what I do. It so depends on the situation, if there's a real severe chance that it's going to decrease the efficacy of treatment tremendously in somebody who has a very high possibility of cure, or of amelioration of the cancer, I think we would have to be very careful. Often with later stage disease, doctors are going to be more supportive of using a number of different things. It's going to be so individualized of how we would how we would approach it. And that would be something that you would want to, that's why you want to have somebody at

least who can work with you, who knows something about the treatments, that you were doing,

[Marla] I am the queen skeptic. I was a nurse for 30 years is always focused on evidence-based treatment. I was halfway through my masters to teach nursing when I got diagnosed and that was six and a half years ago, and believe it or not I had it in my mind I was all set to go, to pass on, I figured you know I, I was okay with it. I was on mental mindset but because it was so long ago, now I'm like well no, hey, I want to live longer. I'm not so ready to go now so now I'm thinking this you know whatever I can do to extend but the other half of me is going is this like Hokum-pokum magic, or is it really something that's real, you know, the reiki, and the acupuncture and the acu- massage, and the special herbal pills, so many herbals. I've tried herbals, you know here and there, and like you know, melatonin for sleep and it doesn't do anything. I'm still like okay when's this gonna work, you know, it so that's why I keep asking about studies. Anyway, I look at the reference section in the book again and see what studies are out there, because if you can convert this skeptic you can convert anybody, any anywhere, but I'm so interested in this and you've clarified a lot of things and I appreciate that, thank you, helpful really helpful.

[Misha] Yeah I and I know there's more and more studies that are being done. Whenever we update the chapter I find more things that are you know more studies that have been done and that's always exciting to me. Because it's like at the beginning there was you know very, very, little especially, in herbal medicine and now there's much, much, more.

[Marla] Good.

[Sherry] Hey Misha, I was gonna talk about acupuncture. I know you had said massage can help with anxiety but what about acupuncture, can acupuncture help with relieving anxiety?

[Misha] Absolutely, we use acupuncture for anxiety all the time; the concept in Chinese medicine is Mind Body Spirit and they're not separate from each other, and there are many acupuncture points that actually have the name spirit in

them, and many of those points are points that are for anxiety, and depression, as well. When we, if we diagnose it that way as opposed to a spiritual or mind problem, we use it all the time. You know one of the things is I worked in detox, you know a long time ago, and I still do a lot of it but one of the things we did is we did ear acupuncture. And there's very specific ear acupuncture points that you wouldn't even need other body points that you can just use there's one called Shen men's Spirit gate, there's Brain Points, there's other points that that are calming ,and help people to sleep, etc.

[Sherry] Thank you sure I'm very interested in trying Qi Gong and I wanted to know what is the best time of day to practice Qi Gong?w

[Misha] Now I'm not a Qi Gong master, and I can't really speak completely to that. I think speaking with a practitioner Qi Gong and asking them your specific situation, because I think it's partially going to be dependent on your particular constitution, when to practice, you know, some people find if they practice at night that it keeps them awake because it increases their energy, some people find that if they do it in the morning, they're more relaxed throughout the whole day, one of the things that's kind of interesting is there's a time clock in Chinese medicine that many Qi Gong practitioners would probably be aware of and be able to talk with you about.

[Sherry] That sounds good. Thank you Misha.

[Cindy] My brother-in-law just went through treatment for cancer and has neuropathy in his feet you touched on that a little bit with acupuncture, but does the effectiveness of the acupuncture based on how far the neuropathy has gone or progressed?

[Misha] It can be but not always, it depends on the individual, you know so, so we will treat people who many years later still have neuropathy and have good success. But, what we try to do is prevent neuropathy and use treatments to prevent it as well as treat people during the course of their active cancer treatment.

[Cindy] okay

[Misha] We feel pretty successful with that. There's some studies that have been done, they're not the greatest studies; development of certain treatments based on body physiology, as opposed to necessarily acupuncture meridians, but based on nerve pathways, and so I think those tend to be treatments that work quite well for people. But different people have different things. For me, I'm going to treat areas very directly.

[Cindy] Thank you for that.

[Misha] Sure

[Cindy] Oftentimes you're required to take a large amount of pills when you're on herbal therapy, is there a recommendation for patients who have a difficult time swallowing the pills, or taking multiple pills, or suggestions for that?

[Misha] We've worked a lot with this, it depends the form of the pills and I sometimes capsules are easier for people to take than pills; and so if their formulas are encapsulated a lot of times people are better with that, but oftentimes herbs can be taken out of their capsules or given in powders. We have some formulas that we'll use the powder forms and have people either cook them ,or take them as powders and it's a lot it's a lot easier. You can also usually depending on the herb formulas, you can usually grind the herbs and the pills and that they they're getting the right dose. you know so you need to them Etc. We had a whole thing that we did with the formula we use marrow plus, where we had to give people, at times, when we were treating people who were going through hepatitis C treatment; where we had to have people take like 36 pills a day. Somebody, actually one of the patients came up with this, where you grinded up a marrow plus pudding, and so they would make a good tasting thing, you know to mix the herbs with and divide it up so that they had the full dose during the day. So those are always possibilities, most herbs can be taken that way, but not all of them. You have to ask the practitioner about it.

[Cindy] okay

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[Marla] If it's a physical matter of the pills there's a spray thing you can get that makes the pills slippery. It's just like in Walgreens or CVS or whatever. Does marijuana play into this? I was just thinking about a lot of people do take marijuana in some form or another, does it interfere with the Chinese herbal stuff?

[Misha] Not that I've ever seen, I mean people use it in combination a lot. We will recommend sometimes, CBD, as part of treatment.

[Sherry] With insurance, I mean it seems like insurance has come a long ways with covering massage therapy. I know at my cancer hospital you can have massage and we even have mindfulness; a Zoom thing where they do mindfulness meditation that's free, but as far as Chinese herbal therapies do you ever see insurance companies coming into play covering any of those down the road?

[Misha] I think it's pretty unlikely. There was one company, many years ago, that tried to cover herbal medicine and it really didn't work. It's really complicated because you need a formulary, and all kinds of things, and so trying to create that was really difficult. However, people can use their FSA's and HAS's for Chinese oral medicine. So anybody who has that as part of their insurance plan, it's absolutely possible. What we have to do often times is write a letter of medical necessity. We are license practitioners and we can write a letter of medical necessity for them, that's for an FSA, for an HSA you don't need anything. Oftentimes, that's how people will pay for herbal treatment. Now acupuncture is totally different depending on where, what state you're in. I don't know where you live but,

[Sherry] you're right, in Florida

[Misha] Yeah you have it covered under your insurance. A few states that don't do that but, certainly in California, since the Affordable Care Act, acupuncture has been considered an essential benefit in our state. And so it has to be offered to all insurance plans. Doesn't mean that everybody gets acupuncture as part of it, but it has to be offered to all insurance plans and all insurance plans have to offer it to

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the companies, to have acupuncture as part of their policies. So at least that that part is often covered.

[Sherry] Yeah, good information, thank you.

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