

Types and predictors of complementary/alternative medicine used by patients with colon cancer

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Background: Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are believed to be prevalent. Because increased religiosity and spirituality have been found to be associated with higher CAM use in the general population, it was hypothesized as an important predictor of CAM use in cancer survivors.

Objective: To investigate the distribution and various patterns of CAM used by adults diagnosed with colon-rectal cancer.

Method: A total of 607 diagnosed colon-rectal cancer patients were collected from three Veterans General Hospitals during 2003 to 2004. All recruited subjects had signed a written informed consent after the explanation by his/her outpatient visit physician and finished self-report questionnaires.

The patterns of CAM used in this study includes: (a)traditional Chinese Medicine treatment; (b) acupuncture and qigong treatment; and (c)diet treatment. Descriptive analyses, Chi-square test and logistic regression were performed in this study.

Result: Nearly 50% study patients utilized both western medical treatment and one type of CAM simultaneously during investigating period 2003 to 2004, overall, 17% of patients used traditional Chinese medicine, 4.8% used acupuncture or qigong treatment, and 38.6% used diet supplements. Higher education was associated with use of traditional Chinese

medicine and diet treatment. Those patients whether purchased of cancer insurance from other life insurance or not were less likely to seek CAM which are not provided by Taiwanese National Health Insurance programme. The age of clinical diagnosed as a cancer patient was a significant predictor in seeking different types of CAM. The mean survival time after being diagnosed cancer is 28.5 months.

Conclusion: Those colon-rectal cancer patients are more likely to report using diet treatment and traditional Chinese medicine, and less likely to report using acupuncture and qigong. How to help cancer patients in familiar with some knowledge regarding use of CAM is important in cases where conventional western medicine and CAM may utilize interactively.