

Can Chinese Herbal Medicine Treat Cancer? The Research Says Yes

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A large scale review of research by Australia and Chinese University scientists has proved with thousands of studies using hundreds of thousands of cancer patients that Chinese herbal medicine offers significant treatment for most types of cancers – including breast cancer.

The research comes from Australia's University of Western Sydney and the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. The researchers analyzed and reviewed 2,964 human clinical studies that involved 253,434 cancer patients. Among these were 2,385 randomized controlled studies and 579 non-randomized controlled studies.

These studies covered most of the cancer types, but the cancers most studied were lung cancer, liver cancer, stomach cancer, breast cancer, esophageal cancer, **colorectal cancer** and nasopharyngeal (throat and sinus) cancer. Yes, breast cancer was the fourth most-studied type of cancer among these thousands of clinical studies.

The researchers discovered that the overwhelming majority of studies – 90% of the clinical studies – utilized herbal medicine.

The researchers found that 72% of these studies applied Traditional Chinese Medicine alongside conventional treatment, but a full 28% applied Traditional Chinese Medicine separately to experimental groups.

In terms of cancer patients, about 64% were given both TCM and conventional medical treatments. The rest were given TCM therapy alone, but a little over half of them did not qualify whether the patient was given conventional treatment at some point in the past.

Because of the large number of studies, there were different types of results, depending upon the type of study, the type of treatment, and the outcome measures tested. Still, in a full 1,015 studies or 85% of those that reported on symptoms, TCM treatment resulted in improvement of cancer symptoms with many of those reporting reduced pain. Another 883 studies – 70% – showed increased survival rates. Another 38% showed reduced tumor size, and 28% showed increased quality of life. Another 19% showed lower relapse rates and another 7% showed reduced complications.

The researchers also found that only a few studies tested TCM acupuncture treatment in cancer therapy. In their discussion they qualified that **acupuncture treatment** in cancer therapy to alleviate pain is quite popular in the U.S., but in Chinese cancer studies, herbal medicine therapy is the leading type of holistic treatment for cancer.

This study follows another extensive review of research published in 2012 on TCM cancer treatment. This study comes from Norway's National Research Center in Complementary and Alternative Medicine and the University of Tromsø, Norway, also with collaboration with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine.

This earlier study reviewed significantly fewer studies, compiling 716 trials that included 1,198 cancer patients with either leukemia, stomach cancer, liver cancer or esophageal cancer.

Among these studies, 98.5% used herbal medicine, and again, acupuncture therapy was rare. In this study, symptom improvement was achieved in 85% of the patients that used the TCM therapy.

In yet another study – this one much larger than the second – 1,217 clinical studies between 1958 and 2011, involving 92,945 patients were analyzed and reviewed by researchers from the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. Among these studies, 66% of the patients were treated with TCM therapy alone, while 34% of the patients were treated with a combination of TCM and conventional cancer therapy. Also, 82% of the patients were given herbal medicines orally.

Only 5% of the patients were given more than one type of TCM therapy. This means that 95% were treated with only one type of TCM therapy – typically with a precise combination of herbs.

This study found that among the studies treating cancer, symptom relief was the prominent result among 88% of the studies and among 88% of the patients tested with TCM therapy. Increased survival rates resulted in 73% of patients. Among all the rest of the studies, 96% of the trials resulted in symptom relief and 92% of the patients reported cancer symptom relief.

Did we get this right? Was that 88% and 92% symptom improvement or relief among thousands of studies and nearly 100,000 cancer patients? And 85% improvement of cancer symptoms among 716 clinical studies? And 85% symptom improvement among 1,015 clinical studies among a review involving over 250,000 cancer patients that tested the effectiveness of Chinese herbal medicine against cancer?

It sounds pretty solid that Chinese herbal medicine does indeed treat cancer and overwhelmingly results in the improvement or relief of symptoms as well as longer survival rates and reduced metastases.

Now why again is Western conventional medicine still refusing to at least consider herbal medicine therapy in cancer treatment? Could there be a profit motive involved? Could it have to do with the fact that herbal medicines cannot be patented? In other words, is Western conventional medicine ignoring **inexpensive natural treatments** that could help millions of cancer patients simply because of profits?

Actions speak louder than words.