

Media Release

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Complementary therapies improve lives of people living with cancer

MELBOURNE: A new study shows simple therapies, such as massage, boost the quality of life and reduce distress symptoms in cancer patients.

The study by the SolarisCare Foundation, to be presented today (9/11) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting in Melbourne, found a 14 per cent reduction in symptom distress, with patients reporting improvements in pain, fatigue, nausea, appetite, sleep, breathing and bowels.

Patients also reported an eight per cent increase per session in their quality of life, using a scale which measures empowerment, depression, anxiety, frustration, confusion, coping and relaxation.

The researchers measured the quality of life and symptom distress of 1244 cancer patients receiving complementary therapies in addition to the mainstream cancer treatment.

The therapies were based on:

- Touch: bower therapy, aromatherapy, reflexology
- Energy: reiki, pranic healing
- Mind: meditation, chi breathing
- Support counselling

According to lead researcher and Head of Haematology at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Dr David Joske, the research demonstrates the positive impact complementary therapies can have on cancer patients. "It's too early to know whether these therapies have a real biological impact or merely create a placebo effect," Dr Joske said.

"In any case, there's no doubt that there is an improved outcome for cancer patients. I have seen my patients change their mentality to feel empowered about the management of their cancer. The research creates a compelling case for integrated medicine.

"We also see a change in the attitude of patients towards attending their treatment, most likely due to the complementary therapies they are receiving in addition to the less enjoyable treatments like chemotherapy. This probably improves compliance with mainstream treatment."

COSA President, Professor Bruce Mann, said the findings were interesting, although other research would be presented at the meeting indicating symptoms generally settled with time. "The suggestion complementary therapies may contribute to patients having a more positive approach to conventional treatment is welcome and merits further investigation."

[Dr Joske will present his research at 4.40pm today \(Nov 9\) at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting. Rooms 105/106, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.](#)

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