

Enhancing Cancer Care: Complementary Therapy and Support

Barraclough J, editor. Oxford University Press, Oxford (UK), 2007. ISBN 978-0-19-929755-9. Price £24.95.

This reference book on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) contains contributions by several authors, each apparently specializing in a particular area of the field. Most of the authors are based in the United Kingdom, with the remaining mostly from the United States and Canada. The book aims to provide health care professionals involved in cancer care with an overview of the principles and settings of CAM, followed by a review of specific therapies.

Would a pharmacist find this book useful? It depends. Most hospital pharmacists probably deal primarily with natural health products, and then only when questions arise during the routine care of cancer patients. This book would probably not meet most of their needs, since natural health products are addressed in only 2 of the 23 chapters (entitled “Herbal Medicine” and “Nutrition”), and the number of references cited is limited. As a provincial drug information pharmacist in oncology, I tend to avoid focusing on the products themselves when responding to patients’ questions. Rather, I try to help patients to make a reasonably informed decision on whether or how to use each product, usually following a structured counselling approach.¹ When I do need to look for more detailed information about specific products, I usually find the Natural Comprehensive Medicine Database (available by subscription only; see <http://www.naturaldatabase.com>) helpful, as it provides more referenced information than most resources. Medline Plus (<http://medlineplus.gov/>) is a useful web-based resource that is freely accessible to users.

Alternatively, a pharmacist may be interested in learning more about the background for various CAM therapies, so that he or she can grasp the whole picture of a patient’s clinical care. In this situation, the book would be helpful and has more detailed information than the *Guide to Complementary and Alternative Cancer Methods*, published by the American Cancer Society in 2000, or the website of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (<http://nccam.nih.gov/>), neither of which provides sufficient detail on evidence of efficacy or safety to allow a pharmacist to make any particular recommendations.

Pharmacists are not generally mentioned in *Enhancing Cancer Care* (not even in the chapter on herbal medicine), although many natural health products are available in community pharmacies. Other books that may have more relevance to the role of pharmacists in CAM have been published by the Pharmaceutical Press of the Royal

Pharmaceutical Society, covering such topics as aromatherapy, dietary supplements, herbal medicines, homeopathy, and nutraceuticals. The book’s editor, Jennifer Barraclough, previously edited a text on a related topic, *Integrated Cancer Care* (Oxford University Press, 2001), although the 2 books had different contributors.

The current text is divided into 2 parts. Part 1, entitled “Principles and Settings”, consists of 7 chapters that provide an overview of the philosophy behind and the use of CAM, as well as some of the settings in which it is practised. Overall, this part of the book is relatively balanced in pointing out the potential benefits of and concerns about CAM. The chapters on practice settings are interesting in that they relate to the use of CAM in oncology settings, although most are based in the United Kingdom. Part 2, entitled “ABC of Therapies”, is somewhat less consistently written, with some contributors focusing mainly on outlining rather than reviewing particular CAM therapies. The chapters called “Herbal Medicine” and “Nutrition” are of obvious interest to pharmacists. However, as mentioned above, these sections give only a flavour of these topics, without sufficient detail to help pharmacists in advising patients on particular products. Also, I could not locate any discussion of the ongoing controversy about phytoestrogens (e.g., soy products) for patients or survivors of breast cancer. Some popular CAM products are not mentioned at all, probably because they do not fit into these or other chapters (e.g., antineoplastons, melatonin, intravenous ascorbic acid). Chapters on other CAM therapies are more descriptive than evaluative.

Specific statements in each chapter are referenced, but some other key references^{2,3} addressing the safety of antioxidants in conjunction with conventional cancer treatments should probably have been included. Also, I found no mention of the negative findings of randomized controlled studies on therapeutic touch⁴ and prayer⁵ in the chapters entitled “Healing” and “The Spiritual Dimension”, respectively.

Overall, this book offers useful background on the underlying principles of CAM in general and many CAM therapies in particular. Pharmacists interested in learning how to advise patients on natural health products may need to look at some of the texts and resources mentioned above.

References

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Introduction to Public Health in Pharmacy

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Goal 6 of the recently published CSHP 2015 goals is "To increase the extent to which pharmacy departments in hospitals and related health care settings engage in public health initiatives on behalf of their communities". This goal speaks to the need for hospital pharmacists to become more involved in public health. Similarly, the Blueprint for Pharmacy outlines the need for pharmacists in all practice settings to become more involved in health promotion, disease prevention, and management of chronic disease. These documents, along with a number of other initiatives already under way, emphasize the importance of a role in public health for pharmacists working in all settings.

The objective of *Introduction to Public Health in Pharmacy* is to provide in-depth information focusing on the role of pharmacy in the public health arena. The book's content will be extremely valuable as pharmacy and pharmacists seek to expand their role in this realm. This detailed and well-referenced book consists of 15 chapters grouped into

3 parts: Public Health Knowledge Base, Pharmacy and Public Health Services, and Applications for Pharmacy Practice. The section on the knowledge base for public health provides an introduction to public health and pharmacy and a detailed section on epidemiology for pharmacists. It also covers disease prevention and promotion, as well as environmental, occupational, and behavioural health. The section on pharmacy and public health services covers such topics as an overview of public health services in the United States, evaluation in pharmacy practice, financing, managed care, and pharmacoeconomics. The section on applications in pharmacy practice discusses such topics as evolving issues in pharmacy practice, law and ethics, cultural perspectives, public health informatics, health emergency preparedness and response, and education and training.

More specifically, the book describes the opportunities for pharmacists in a broad range of public health activities encompassing vaccination programs, disease prevention, health promotion, chronic disease management, and compliance programs. It also covers the financial side of public health, dealing with access to medications for patients who lack financial means. It discusses the role of pharmacists in all practice settings and considers health promotion and disease prevention in the broader context. The authors present several case studies to demonstrate practical applications of the principles outlined in the book. Each chapter also features a section on implications for pharmacy practice.

The book provides details specific to the US health care system and therefore has limited value in terms of specifics for Canadian pharmacists, although the general principles and knowledge presented are applicable in the Canadian setting.

This book presents comprehensive information about and principles related to public health, particularly as it relates to pharmacy practice, albeit in the context of the US health care system. It would be a valuable resource for pharmacists and pharmacy educators who wish to learn or teach about the role of pharmacists in public health.

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