

INTEGRATIVE ONCOLOGY PATIENT EDUCATION: CREATING & UPDATING RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTIVE CARE

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Background

Many patients look to support their wellbeing during treatment for cancer through use of integrative therapies. Patients will often gather information from online sources with questionable credibility. To address the resulting information needs, a group of integrative oncology providers and researchers collaborated to develop patient education brochures on natural therapies found to be safe and supportive in human clinical trials. Using published data from [KNOWintegrativeoncology.org](https://knowintegrativeoncology.org) in addition to PubMed.gov, educational brochures were created in 2019 on initial topics relevant to cancer survivors. The brochures were updated in 2025. The brochures titled “Wellness During Tamoxifen Treatment” and “Protecting the Heart” are presented in this poster.

References:

1. Capelan M, Battisti NML, McLoughlin A, Maidens V, Snuggs N, Slyk P, Peckitt C, Ring A. The prevalence of unmet needs in 625 women living beyond a diagnosis of early breast cancer. Br J Cancer. 2017 Oct 10;117(8):1113-1120.
2. Okediji PT, Salako O, Fatiregun OO. Pattern and Predictors of Unmet Supportive Care Needs in Cancer Patients. Cureus. 2017; 9(5): e1234.
3. Online Utility. Readability Calculator. Available at http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp. Accessed on Feb 1 2019.

Methodology

Initial topics relevant to a high percentage of people surviving with cancer were chosen by consensus by a multidisciplinary team from Cancer Choices, KNOW, and the Center for Health Innovation (CHI) OICC. The team consisted of naturopathic doctors, researchers, patient advocates, medical oncologists, and oncology nurses.

To update the brochures, the KNOW database and PubMed® were used to identify human studies relevant to the patient education brochure topics published up to 2025. The data selected by the expert team was primary literature in humans determined to be of sufficient quality (e.g. RCTs with low risk of bias, observational studies of impact). In addition, studies reporting on interventions with a high degree of safety were prioritized.

KNOW search methodology uses the original detailed PubMed® dietary supplement subset from 2019 as its initial search criterion and customized this to include additional natural therapy terms. Using the Ovid® platform, KNOW searched Ovid MEDLINE®, Ovid MEDLINE In-Process & Other Non-Indexed Citations and Embase Classic+Embase from inception to January 2025. Relevant studies (English language, human level, all cancer types) are parallel screened for inclusion criteria, and data are extracted, tagged, peer-reviewed and uploaded to [KNOWintegrativeoncology.org](https://knowintegrativeoncology.org). KNOW study inclusion criteria can be referenced here [<https://knowintegrativeoncology.org/methodology>].

Patient brochures are designed using the following guidelines:

- Write for patients as the primary audience, using lay language at a 10th-grade level
- Select topics by consensus and review of evidence
- Focus on behaviors and natural therapies with evidence of safety and benefit
- Use language that is supportive and encouraging
- Limit content to 5 pages in length
- Provide references to enable patient-provider discussion
- Include review by multidisciplinary providers
- Language is checked using three readability indexes: Flesch Kincaid, SMOG and ARI

Team workflow for 2025 brochure updates:

- A combination of curated database review, expert input, and hand searching was used to identify and include recent and relevant evidence in this brochure update
- During March - May 2025, the team participated in a shared online workspace for commentary and discussion.
- The team determined that data relevant to quality of life, symptoms management and survival would be prioritized under new subject headings.
- Consensus on added or edited points or references for the updated brochure was achieved through commenting on suggested edits and approving or disapproving in an online shared workspace with 1 moderator from KNOW team finalizing the updated brochure for shared final review.

Results

Patient education brochures: “[Wellness during Tamoxifen](#)” and “[Protecting the Heart](#)” each hosted by multiple institutions online with free access by patients and providers.

Conclusion

To facilitate the creation of accessible patient education handouts on integrative therapies for use in cancer care, providers and researchers from the KNOW project, Cancer Choices, the Center for Health Innovation, and Patterson Institute teams collaborated to create and update evidence informed patient information brochures in 2019 and 2025. The intent of the brochures is to provide credible, up-to-date information on integrative therapies specific to topics relevant to patients receiving oncology care. The education brochures are available online and can be accessible to patients and clinicians in print wherever care is delivered.



Collaborating
Organizations:

