About 4 of 10 adults in the United States use some type of complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) therapy, with the rate being higher among patients with serious illnesses, such as cancer. The purpose of this article is to provide oncology nurses with an understanding of the use of CAMs in cancer survivorship. By understanding the characteristics of typical users, the reasons for their use, and ethnic- and gender-related considerations, nurses can identify patients in this population and safely guide their use of CAM throughout survivorship. The literature provides a foundation to identify survivor needs and issues as they relate to CAM use. Nurses can play a critical role in the assessment and education of CAM use within survivor programs, with the ultimate goal being increased overall well-being and survival.

At a Glance

- Understanding the characteristics of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use in cancer survivors is essential to providing education and counseling.
- Care of the survivor should include identification and assessment of CAM for each individual.
- Cancer survivors are interested in information and self-care strategies. Nurses should understand assessment and counseling in these therapies.