An Integrative Approach to Addressing Clinical Issues in Complementary and Alternative Medicine in an Outpatient Oncology Center

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Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is popular among patients with cancer and often is used in conjunction with conventional medicine, mostly without the knowledge or guidance of healthcare professionals. The popularity of CAM has brought into sharp focus clinical issues such as the lack of disclosure and concern about interactions among dietary supplements, prescribed medications, and diseases. Those clinical issues underscore the need for a coordinated approach to integrate CAM therapies safely into conventional medicine. This article describes how an integrative CAM program in an outpatient oncology center addresses some of the clinical issues. The CAM program uses a nurse specialist to interface between CAM and conventional medicine. An interesting aspect of the CAM program is the provision of patient consultation and the creation of an individualized complementary therapies plan.

At a Glance
✦ A complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) program is created to address challenging clinical issues that result from the steady increase in CAM use.
✦ The goal of a CAM program is to integrate CAM therapies into conventional medicine, thus addressing some of the clinical issues such as communication gaps among CAM users, healthcare providers, and CAM practitioners.
✦ A special feature of the CAM program is the provision of an individualized patient consultation by a nurse specialist. The end result of the consultation is a complementary therapies plan, based on established standards of practice, for the patient to use.

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