

Six-month-to-live-patient with Bone Cancer of Unknown Origin Revived by Herbs: A Case Study

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Citation

C Teo, C Im-Teo. *Six-month-to-live-patient with Bone Cancer of Unknown Origin Revived by Herbs: A Case Study*. The Internet Journal of Pain, Symptom Control and Palliative Care. 2005 Volume 4 Number 2.

Abstract

Nathan (not real name), a 66-year-old male, was diagnosed with bone cancer of unknown primary. After undergoing chemotherapy and radiotherapy, he was immobilised to the extent of not being able to lie down. He had severe pains and was on daily morphine intake. Nathan was put on herbs and within a week, he was able to walk. As of this writing, six years since his first visit to us, Nathan is doing well and is leading a normal, pain-free life.

Declaration of Interest: The authors are practising herbalists and as such have financial interest in the use or marketing of the herbs mentioned in this article.

INTRODUCTION

We initiated Cancer Care project in 1995. In order for us to understand the needs of cancer patients, our first task was to study the data collected from 582 patients who came to us for help. Most patients who came to us suffered from cancer of the breast (17.2%), lung (13.4%), colorectum (11.7%) and liver (9.8%). Other cancers encountered were those of the ovary, uterus, prostate, brain, bone, oesophagus, etc.

All of those who came to Cancer Care have already seen their doctors. Most of them have already undergone one or a combination modality of surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or hormonal therapy. Apart from the cancer, patients have other associated problems that make life so miserable to most of them. They presented with pains (25.3%), constipation (16.3%), coughs (15.0%), ascites (5.3%), edema (6.0%) and abdominal distension (5.0%). Some were suffering from the side effects of chemotherapy or radiotherapy (6.0%) (1).

Despite all the new technological advances and billions of dollars spent on the “cancer war” in the last few decades, a review of literature shows that the incidence of cancer and cancer mortality are increasing (2). It is estimated that 50% to 60% of all patients with cancer die as a result of the progression of their illness (3).

While the primary aim of medical treatment is to cure the disease and prolong life, often this is not possible. In cases where cure is not possible, then palliative care is provided. Unfortunately, among those who came to see us, 36% of them fall into this category – they have been medically written-off and did not know what else to do (1).

In carrying out our mission, we are mindful of what Susan Love wrote: We are still approaching treatment for breast cancer in the same ways: surgery, radiation and chemotherapy... Most of the great leaps forward in medicine have come from creative thinkers outside of the mainstream who are willing to buck the status quo and try something new (4).

As a botanist, the senior author felt that we could make some meaningful contributions to lessen the misery faced by cancer patients, especially those who do not have any other avenue to turn to. The use of traditional herbs has been shown by doctors in China to be effective not only to improve quality of life but also to prolong survival of cancer patients (5).

It has been a decade since we started Cancer Care and we are glad that we have achieved a good share of success in using herbs for cancer. In this paper we document a case of medically written-off bone cancer patient.

CASE PRESENTATION

Nathan (not real name), a male of 66 years, suffered from cancer of an undetermined origin. The cancer had spread to

his backbone. His spine, T8, was eroded.

His case was referred to two specialists overseas but no one was able to determine where the origin was. Nathan had undergone chemotherapy but he gave that up after one cycle. He had six radiation treatments after which he remained confined to the deck chair unable to move for about two months.

Nathan's son came to seek our help on 17 December 1999. He told us that his father had backaches and was on morphine, 30 mg twice daily. He was unable to lie down flat to sleep. So all day and night, he had to sit and sleep on a deck chair. He had a poor appetite and was tired. Both of his legs were swollen. Nathan was constipated and had burning sensations in the chest. We prescribed Nathan some herbs: Capsule A, Bone Tea and C-tea.

After one week on the herbs, Nathan personally came with his son to our Centre. He told us that the herbs were helpful. However, Nathan was not happy with the bitter taste of the herbs. Chris told him: Uncle Nathan, healing needs inputs and sacrifices from you. It does not come easy. We have given you the best that we have! The rest is your responsibility.

It was a great surprise for us to see Nathan again on 30 December 1999. This time, he walked confidently into our Centre all by himself, without any help. He looked great. He told us that there were less pains and the morphine intake was reduced to 15 mg twice daily and then to 15 mg once a day. His appetite was very good. He was able to lie down flat and sleep. There was no more swelling in both his legs. His bowel movements were back to normal and the burning sensations in his chest had disappeared.

Chris asked Nathan if the bitterness of the herbs was worth the price to pay. Nathan gave a broad and satisfying smile.

From that day on, Nathan was on his healing path. After two months on the herbs, he was able to walk around the neighbourhood. One month later, he could follow his son to Ipoh (a town about 200 km away) to visit relatives. After eight months on the herbs, he could take a bus ride by himself to come out to town. Later he visited India with his family.

On 26 April 2001, one year and four months later, Nathan shared his experiences with us. This video-taped interview (VCD available for general viewing) was done a week before Nathan was to go to India for a second visit. The

following are excerpts of our conversation.

Chris: How do you feel now?

Nathan: Now, I am fine. I eat well and can clear my bowels without problems.

You can drive?

I can drive.

I was told that you are going to India?

Yes. I'm going to India for three weeks. This time I am going alone, by myself.

Do you have any pains?

No pains, except for the knees.

Around September to October 1999, tell us what happened? That was when your problem started?

I had severe back pains. These were terrible pains that lasted twenty four hours a day. At first, I took Panadol but the pains would return one or two hours later. One month later, I went to see the doctor. They couldn't find what was wrong. They gave me liquid morphine. When I drank it, the pains would go away for a few hours, but then they returned.

Did the doctors actually know what was wrong?

The doctor did a biopsy and sent it to Australia and Singapore. The results were positive for bone cancer, but they couldn't determine the primary location of the cancer.

You landed in the hospital. So, what did the doctors tell you?

Nathan's Son: They told me that my father had Stage Four cancer. They told me to get his will done and gave him about six months to live. We got that done – the will and the bank account. My father then went for six sessions of radiotherapy. He felt pains, so he continued with the oral morphine. After the radiotherapy, he still felt pains and became very thin and weak. The dosage of morphine was increased, from 10 mg to 30 mg, twice a day. And there were still pains. He couldn't stand them. Later, he was admitted to the hospital for ten days. They gave him morphine, add in more blood and put him on some drips, but no more radiotherapy. After being discharged from the hospital, they asked my father to go back for chemotherapy when his red blood cell count became normal. He only went for chemotherapy once and then gave that up.

The first time you came to CA Care, did you come personally?

No. At that time I couldn't walk.

What happened after that?

I took the herbs. After one week, the pains stopped. I was still taking the morphine. I felt better.

When you first took the herbs, did you believe they would work?

No. I didn't believe they would.

What made you change your mind?

After one week, I felt less pains. After about fifteen days, I cut down on the morphine. I used to take two tablets a day and this time I took only one tablet a day. Then I took less and less, just one tablet every other day. Within a month of taking the herbs, I stopped taking the morphine completely. There were no more pains.

OK, apart from the pains, anything else?

I felt better and my appetite increased. Eventually, I could bathe myself, although I was a bit slow. Within two months, I could go to the shops around the neighbourhood. I couldn't do all that before I took your herbs. My appetite gradually increased and I put on some weight.

Son: There was a doctor in the neighbourhood, whom we called upon to take care of my father. He would pay a visit to my father after he had radiotherapy. The doctor was surprised that my father had improved and could walk. He thought that my father would not make it. He added that my father should continue with what he has been taking. Previously, my father could only sleep while sitting on the deck chair. After forty days on the herbs, he could sleep on the bed and lie flat. Before that he couldn't even lie down. Now he could sleep well. Slowly, he could drive the car. Then, my father followed me to Ipoh (two to three hours driving time).

In August 2000, he went to India for three weeks. He even took the herbs with him. He could walk and do everything. Now, he has no pains, and his appetite has improved greatly.

How much do you weigh now?

Sixty-five kilograms. Before this, when I was sick, it was only forty-nine kilograms.

Now, when you went to the doctor for a check-up, what did he do?

He took my blood pressure and pressed my body to see if I felt any pains. I felt nothing, so it's okay. Before, I used to go every month for a check-up. Then, he asked me to go every three months. Now, he asks me to come only after six months.

Did you take any other medicine after finishing with the chemotherapy and radiotherapy?

No medicine, only morphine.

When you were taking the herbs, were you also on any other medication?

No medicine, just vitamins.

PRESENT SITUATION AND COMMENTS

As of this writing, more than six years after his initial visit to us, Nathan is still doing well. He had no complaints. We are not able to explain how Nathan recovered from his bone cancer. Neither can anyone. However, over the years we have seen the beneficial effects of herbs for numerous terminal cancer patients. So, when patients like Nathan come to us, we are optimistic. We have documented a similar healing case of bone cancer of unknown primary using herbs (6).

With regards to pains and restoring quality of life, let us relate some other cases.

Ai (not real name) was a 38-year-old female from Singapore.

In June 1998, she was diagnosed with right breast cancer. In July 1998, she underwent chemotherapy. A month later, in September, Ai gave up chemotherapy due to severe side effects. He husband wrote: she had lost her appetite and weight, suffered vomiting and giddiness. With the complete loss of her hair she had no "zest to live".

She took a high dosage of linzhi (mushroom). In June 1999, Ai underwent a right mastectomy. She was pregnant at that time. The doctor advised her against having baby, but she insisted on having her baby. She gave birth on 19 September 1999. In November 1999, she started chemotherapy again. She experienced pain in the abdomen. Her cancer had spread to the liver.

Her husband came to us for help on 2 November 1999. At that time, she was on morphine every four hours. As a result

she was constipated. She could hardly eat, and was able to swallow only 3 to 4 spoonfuls of food. Her abdomen was distended.

We requested Ai to stop linzhi and prescribed herbs: Capsule A and B, Breast M, Liver P, LL-Tea, Pain Tea, Constipation Tea and Abdominal Distension Tea.

Her husband told us the following: Four days on the herbs, she was morphine-free. There was no more pain. Five days on the herbs, her appetite improved and she had regular bowel movements. Nine days on the herbs, she had less vomiting when she went for chemotherapy. Ten days on the herbs, her appetite improved further. She could eat small but regular amounts of food, seven times per day. She joined meals with the family and started to enjoy food. Fourteen days on the herbs, she was able to go around with the wheelchair with no complaint of tiredness. She was able to go with the family to collect the keys of her new apartment. Twenty days on the herbs, she talked a lot. She always said that she survived because of strong family support and the herbs. Twenty-one days on the herbs, she reported that the pains had decreased tremendously. She could sleep better and had more energy. Her stomach was softer. Her appetite and bowel movements had improved further.

Her husband added: Her only complaint is the taste of the tea... It hounds her in her dreams. But because she wants to live, she is willing to fight for that and would drink the full mug.

Ai died in March 2000. Her husband said "thank you" to us. During the last days of her life she was able to lead a quality life with her family – being able to go shopping and travel to places.

GCT, 73-year-old female, was first admitted to the hospital in 1995 for weight loss. Subsequently she was diagnosed with a poorly to moderately differentiated adenocarcinoma of her left lung with metastasis to her spine. GCT did not want to do any chemotherapy or radiotherapy. She opted for some Chinese herbs instead.

On 13 December 1999, she was readmitted to the same hospital for hip pain. There were degenerative changes in her thoracic spine. The doctor prescribed morphine, initially 5 ml per dose which later was increased to 10 ml at four hourly. Her daughter and relative came to see us on 19 December 1999 and presented her condition as follows: she was constipated, had no appetite, there was a swelling on her back and she was oblivious to her surrounding and slept

throughout the day. GCT was prescribed Capsule A, Constipation, Bone, Lung and Pain teas.

On December 26 1999, after one week on the herbs GCT was able to come to Cancer Care personally and reported the following improvements: One day on the Pain Tea, she was able to gradually wean off from her morphine consumption. After taking the herbs, on some days, she did not need morphine at all, but on some days she only took 2 ml morphine once a day, i.e. when there was severe pain. She was more alert and was not sedated anymore. Her appetite had improved. Her bowel movements were good and the swelling on her back was gone.

On 4 January 2001, we received a fax from Mary (not real name). This is what she wrote: My sister-in-law is 54 years old and had a partial mastectomy in 1993 to remove a cancerous growth. Now the cancer had spread to parts of her liver, intestine, ovaries and uterus. She is having bloated abdomen and swelling of the right leg. The bloating of the abdomen is reduced by periodic controlled removal of fluid. No other treatment can be given.

Since Mary was from the State of Sarawak in East Malaysia, we gave her instructions as what to do. On 12 March 2001, we received this fax from Mary:

Message: Prof. Dr. Chris Teo

I got in touch with you on January 4 this year about my sister-in-law who had terminal cancer. Subsequent to your reply, we got in touch and obtained the medication from Dr. L in Kuching. She had been taking the Cancer Therapy medication since then.

My sister-in-law passed away peacefully on 5 March, last Monday. She died without having the need for painkillers, such as morphine although the cancer had spread to almost all the soft organs in her body. She even managed to smile and laugh during her last few days, something very amazing for a person in her condition. She was bedridden but after taking the therapy medication for a few days, she was able to get up and move around (with support of course) until the day that she died.

On behalf of the family, I would like to thank you for the works that you have carried out. We wish you all the best for your Cancer Care Therapy.

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