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Understanding Breast Cancer:

As with my other "Understanding" articles I am always looking for new and interesting ways to present the information. For the purposes of this one I am going to share with you Barbara's (not her real name) story.

Barbara lives in the UK and came to me through the online consultation service I offer through my website. As you will see, Barbara is a nurse and the detail she gave me was a wonderful blend of professional and personal information, which is precisely what I need, to come to an accurate picture of an individual's health problem.

Barbara contacted me May 10, 2001 and introduced herself to me as follows;

Age: 47
Sex: Female
Date of Birth: 5/17/53
Occupation: Nurse

Present Health Problems:

Breast cancer (right side) for 3 yrs. I had a needle biopsy done to confirm this. I'm not sure if it is estrogen sensitive but I assume that it is. I've been managing the cancer myself, mostly with herbs, diet and escharotics. I noticed on your web page that you use Chickweed on skin cancers and wonder if that can be used on an open breast cancer as an escharotic. I feel very strong but have doubts I can beat the cancer altogether. I continue to work as a nurse. Right now I'm using Shark Liver Oil and Bbeta-glucon supplements. I also use Yarrow, Red Clover and Essiac tea.

Major Illnesses:

Hepatitis C (HCV)

Brief Medical History:

I have a history of HCV for which I take Milk Thistle and have had very good results with no elevation of liver enzymes for many years (>5yrs). Otherwise I am healthy. I've had surgery for a thyroglossal cyst at 20 years old. and oral surg for a cyst above one of my incisors at 14 years old. Also I have had cosmetic surgery on my nose (rhinoplasty) about 12 years ago.

Resistance to Common Illnesses:

I never get sick, although I'm around sick people all the time at work. I work in a busy emergency room. I have learned that this is not a good thing, that rather than being a sign that I have a strong immune system that it means my immune system is not functioning as it should when I come in contact to illnesses.

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Dietary and Fluid Intake:

I try to eat all organic foods including antibiotic/hormone free range meats and eggs. I drink 4 or 5 cups of green tea a day and average 3-4 cups of water, sometimes more.

Habits like Smoking and Drinking:

I don't smoke and drink about 1/2 cup of wine every other day. Sometimes I drink black tea.

Bowel and Bladder Patterns:

Bowel movement every day or sometimes every other day. Urination depends on how much water I drink. I usually wake up from sleep to urinate at least once.

Menstrual Cycle:

I'm peri-menopausal and lately very irregular.

Circulation Issues:

I tend to get cold easily and must dress warmly in the winter and in air conditioning in order not to be uncomfortable. Until about 5 years ago, I was hypotensive, but now tend to be hypertensive. I weigh about 110 pounds and am about 5'2".

Stress and Emotional Issues:

I have worked nights off and on for 15 years, since becoming a nurse. I am an artist at heart and I'm "different" to people I work with. Lately I've had problems at work due to this. My co-workers do not have confidence in me and make this clear. I, however, have the support and encouragement of my superiors. I have a male partner who is supportive of me emotionally, although, he has emotional problems himself and I support him financially. My work is also very stressful.

Energy and Vitality:

I feel that I have plenty of energy and vitality.

Other Information:

I have one child, who is now 24 years old. I love her very much but worry about her present and future.

My reply to Barbara dated May 15, 2001 was as follows:

Dear Barbara,

Thank you for such a complete history. I admire your spirit and independence and I can help you. If you have found me, presumably you have had a look at some of the articles on my web page. I recommend to you the Understanding Cancer article and

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even interestingly enough the Rise and Rise of Canine Cancer to give you a perspective on my understanding and approach to the condition.

As I say in these articles, I see cancer as a failure of the 'bottom end' of the immune system (my definition). The 'top end' being resistance to viral and bacterial invasion with the 'bottom' being the invasion from within. Everything we do and feel affects the bottom end in either a positive or a negative way. Falling in love or falling in hate to give obvious examples.

When I first studied herbs and iridology, I expected to find breast cancer sufferers with toxic and clogged lymphatic systems showing as brown clouds toward the outside of the irises in both the left and right eye.

I have now treated hundreds of breast cancer sufferers and lectured to many breast cancer support groups. I have yet to see lymph toxins in the eye of a support group member. They all have lovely blue eyes with a blue aura showing caring and sensitive natures, not a lymphatic spot to be seen.

Your breast cancer is a disease of caring. Caring too much (for others) or caring too little (for self).

Caring for others is a good and positive thing. Caring too much or too little is dangerous. We are taught to turn the other cheek, keep the peace, pick up after others, and step in to help wherever possible but this is a dangerous occupation. One must consciously care for self as you will know as a nurse. The over-carers in the health professions burn out quickly.

My own conclusion is that the over-carers in daily life are probably more at risk than nurses. The over-carers who survive the longest are those who have other outlets and interest's which provide personal sustenance.

- Maybe they garden. You can't get cancer from loving your garden and caring for it too much.
- Maybe they take a break from their main caring responsibilities by finding homes for stray kittens, hiking in the countryside, playing sport, decorating wedding cakes or playing music.
- Most really serious carers take time out by engaging in other caring activities by way of recreation. There is nothing wrong with this as long as these activities offer the sustenance, which might be lacking in their main caring role or occupation.

In your case Barbara, you are denying your own artistic/creative nature, which is crying out for expression. It is trying to tell you what you need to do to turn the tables on your condition. You have a problem of balance in your life. Not enough caring for self, honouring your own spirit, taking precious time out, or following your artistic inclinations.

- Your response to stress is to try harder at your caring since it has in the past always given you so much satisfaction. Now it has turned in upon itself.
- You say. " My co-workers do not have confidence in me and make this clear" It is time you changed things around. Your co-workers see you as a threat,

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- too different, not submitting to the inevitable, not accepting your medical prognosis.
- Your superiors don't care, they want you anchoring their team.
 - You are with a partner who maybe needs caring for also and maybe this is how you are spending too much of your spare time and energy.

If you want to be here for your daughter when she has her children, allowing you to move into Granny mode, I would recommend you changed things around drastically and settled for art and a little light caring work. Child day care centres, hospice or nursing home, dog pound, writing on the experiences of caring, whatever.

I also sent Barbara's questionnaire back to her with the further practical comments and recommendations included. Please read her questionnaire again and spend some time absorbing the highlighted recommendations in view of my written reply just presented; (my replies are in Red)

Present Health Problems:

Breast cancer (right side) for 3 yrs. I had a needle biopsy done to confirm this. I'm not sure if it is oestrogen sensitive but I assume that it is. I've been managing the cancer myself, mostly with herbs, diet and escharotics. I noticed on your web page that you use Chickweed on skin cancers and wonder if that can be used on an open breast cancer as an escharotic. **Yes continue with fresh Chickweed Juice as long as it is not too irritant** I feel very strong but have doubts I can beat the cancer altogether. I continue to work as a nurse. Right now I'm using Shark Liver Oil and Beta-glucon supplements. I also use Yarrow, Red Clover and Essiac tea. **Essiac is good and so are Yarrow and Red Clover, both of which are powerful blood tonics. Cod Liver Oil would probably be better than the Shark Oil you are currently taking and I am unfamiliar with Beta-glucon. I would recommend Maritime Pine Antioxidant at a dose rate of 20 drops twice per day, which I will provide in 1:2 extract strength. I suggest that you drink Rosehips Tea and Chamomile Tea as your major drink. Four cups daily of the Rosehips for the top level of your immune system and two of the Chamomile for your over-caring nature and nervous system. There is nothing wrong at all with a glass of a good red and I recommend you treat yourself daily with one.**

Major Illnesses:

Hepatitis C (HCV)

Brief Medical History:

I have a history of HCV for which I take Milk Thistle **Milk Thistle and Dandelion Root are both excellent liver tonics and, as you have proven, can keep Hep.C. at bay indefinitely** and have had very good results with no elevation of liver enzymes for many years (>5yrs). Otherwise I am healthy. I've had surgery for a thyroglossal cyst at 20 years old. and oral surg for a cyst above one of my incisors at 14 years old. Also I have had cosmetic surgery on my nose (rhinoplasty) about 12 years ago.

Resistance to Common Illnesses:

I never get sick, although I'm around sick people all the time at work. I work in a busy emergency room. I have learned that this is not a good thing, that rather than

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being a sign that I have a strong immune system that it means my immune system is not functioning as it should when I come in contact to illnesses. Maritime Pine and the herbs I recommend will build up the Oxygen efficiency of your blood. The Vitamin C in the Rosehips and the massively powerful antioxidants in the Maritime Pine will together build up half of the bottom end of the immunity. The changes you make and the energy you put into caring for the needs of your self/soul/spirit will build up the other half.

Dietary and Fluid Intake:

I try to eat all organic foods including antibiotic/hormone free range meats and eggs. I drink 4 or 5 cups of green tea a day and average 3-4 cups of water, sometimes more.

Habits like Smoking and Drinking:

I don't smoke and drink about 1/2 cup of wine every other day. Sometimes I drink black tea.

Bowel and Bladder Patterns:

Bowel movement every day or sometimes every other day. Urination depends on how much water I drink. I usually wake up from sleep to urinate at least once.

Menstrual Cycle:

I'm peri-menopausal and lately very irregular.

Circulation Issues:

I tend to get cold easily and must dress warmly in the winter and in air conditioning in order not to be uncomfortable. You didn't mention if you bruise easily but people who feel the cold are often those who don't maintain blood oxygen at sufficiently high levels. Rosehips is a circulation tonic being very high in Iron. The Rue I am prescribing strengthens blood vessel walls against leakage, which is a reason behind this low blood oxygen in many cases. The Red Clover and Yarrow, which you are self-prescribing, are both supporting red blood cell health and production. Until about 5 years ago, I was hypotensive, but now tend to be hypertensive. I weigh about 110 pounds and am about 5'2". Hypotension is probably your normal and healthy state and the more recent hypertension is a result of your increased stress and the fact that you are soldiering on under increasingly heavy loads and increasingly unsupported by your co-workers?.

Stress and Emotional Issues:

I have worked nights off and on for 15 years, since becoming a nurse. I am an artist at heart and I'm "different" to people I work with. Lately I've had problems at work due to this. My co-workers do not have confidence in me and make this clear. I, however, have the support and encouragement of my superiors. I have a male partner who is supportive of me emotionally, although, he has emotional problems himself and I support him financially. My work is also very stressful. The Bach flower remedies Walnut, Water Violet, Wild Oat, Gorse and Red Chestnut are called for to

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support the energies of your body along with regular Reiki treatments. I recommend also Caroline Myss "The Anatomy of the Spirit" as essential and urgent reading.

Energy and Vitality:

I feel that I have plenty of energy and vitality.

Other Information:

I have one child, who is now 24 years old. I love her very much but worry about her present and future.

Breast cancer is just another way the body notifies us that it can no longer manage under the present circumstances and it is its last ditch attempt to get our attention and have us change things in our lives, spirit and circumstances.

As the breast itself, is our primary nurturing organ all breast cancer, is an illness of caring or nurturing. There are two types.

The Breast Cancer Person Type I:

Barbara is an example of an over carer of the self-sacrificial type.

- They allow their own reserves and resources to become depleted by giving over long periods of time and not expecting/allowing or, heaven forbid, 'demanding' support for themselves. They put themselves second to the needs of others.
- They are also sensitive and intuitive to others needs so they end up supporting not only with their physical time and effort but more importantly with their emotional energies which they often deplete savagely.
- Often if they have family or friends who would help support them energetically they don't ask them for support because they don't want to trouble them.
- Often they are in families and relationships, which have them, provide most of the nurturing with little in return. Often also, they are responsible for creating this 'rod for their own back' by over-caring when ordinary levels of caring would have been healthier for all concerned.

The geneticists are running around looking for the Breast Cancer gene which they believe they will find linking the incidence of this illness down through families.

Science, as I have said many times before, will only measure those things, which are subject to measurement. It ignores as unimportant anything that it cannot measure.

I would suggest that Breast Cancer rather than being genetic is contagious. As tiny babies we absorb our mothers values, her attitudes, behaviours and her habits of coping and dealing with stress. We understand and have absorbed all these things

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before we can even talk.

We then go about living our lives the same way or feeling guilty if we don't. This programming is common to both ends of the Breast Cancer spectrum whether they are over caring or feeling bad about the caring they are neglecting to do.

The Breast Cancer Person Type II:

There are breast cancer patients with all the toxins in the eyes where I expected to see them when I first started out. These people however, are not the sort of people who end up in the support groups. They don't spend their lives caring for or seeking out people to help.

The type II sufferer is a much more difficult person and often tormented. The focus of their difficulty however is in their own problems with the function of caring and nurturing.

These people often grew up in families where there were distortions in the whole caring and nurturing environment. I am not talking about those families in which there was little caring because they were all too busy, or too drunk, or too slack or too uptight or too strict or whatever.

To me the problem seems to be that they come from a situation where the emotions surrounding the caring and nurturing function within the family were distorted. Where there was pretence of caring by someone who really didn't like or even hated whoever they were caring for. Where there was a public presentation of loving and caring and behind closed doors there was abuse. Where caring or withholding care was used as a tool to manipulate and control other family members.

The type II breast cancer candidate usually comes from such a family and is somebody who doesn't know how to care and does it poorly and unsuccessfully. What they do know however, is that they are very uncomfortable with themselves in the caring role and full of guilt, fear, insecurity, resentment or even downright hatred. The person who hates or overly favours a child and then hates themselves for their feelings toward that child is one of the more extreme examples.

Type II breast cancer is also then a disease of caring, but in this case it is distorted caring, rather than over-caring.

Treating Breast Cancer:

Barbara has chosen to treat her own case to this point without the orthodox protocols of surgery and chemo or radiotherapy. This makes her very unusual in her age group. It is common enough for elderly women to opt for little or minimal treatment but most uncommon in someone younger.

More uncommon perhaps still for someone in the nursing profession although I do meet many traditionally trained nurses with a very healthy scepticism towards many medical protocols and pharmaceutical drugs. Her differences which are isolating her from her peers will be partly as a result of her stand on her own breast cancer as she would be seen as a threat to the accepted norms in her professional situation. "It is

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OK to be different but don't you dare to be too different!"

Treating both type I and type II breast cancer is similar. Firstly I focus on the vitality of the immune system at both the top and the bottom end with herbs high in vitamins and antioxidants. I also identify and focus on any other historical, medical or physiological weaknesses which the individual may have working against them. In Barbara's case it seems her circulatory system is not as vital as it could be and I am recommending treatment in support of this. In other cases it could be that their physical immunity is low, a history smoking or of heart, kidney or reproductive system problems could be compromising overall physical vitality or whatever. Any and all specific physical health issues should be supported to maximize the total available vitality.

Vitality is the cure for Cancer.

When I have run through the physical vitality problems I must deal with energetic vitality issues as I did in the case of Barbara. These are always more important and usually underpin the reason that the immune system dropped the ball in the first place.

A cancer patient who believes that they are powerless; that cancer dropped from the sky or came out of their genes without them being directly involved in the process, has a far smaller chance of reversing the illness than a self responsible person. One of the side effects of western medical systems is that it takes the responsibility for the causes of illnesses away from the patient. Another, is that it teaches the patient that they can have no effect on the outcome of their illness and that they must hand the responsibility for treatment to the professionals to have any hope of a cure.

Understanding how an illness may have developed is empowering because it allows us to work on changing the circumstances and the energies involved. One of the principal advantages offered by alternative medical systems is that they do offer explanations and tools which people can use to turn their own health around. An understanding and a plan of action, which is within our own power, is vital and provides the vitality to change the outcome of a brush with cancer.

You will notice that I referred Barbara to Reiki treatment as a part of her program. For others, prayer, meditation or other spiritual disciplines may be more appropriate. For yet others the energy they put into refining or purifying their diet or refining or purifying their relationships maybe the key.

Reiki is a very useful tool however, since the practitioner is not taking charge and offering to heal. They are simply acting as a channel in allowing the energetic field, which surrounds the person to normalise, to balance and to reconnect with the energy fields of our world and the cosmos in general. Long-standing habits of misuse of our energy and our vitality always reflect in our aura. The aura needs assistance to normalise and regular Reiki treatments allow this to happen with the minimum of disruption to our day to day lives. This is not to say you may not end up in a different relationship or profession or sitting cross legged with your eyes closed in funny clothes somewhere but this will have come out of your healing rather than having caused it.

Barbara seemed to me to be a practical person, most professional nurses are, and

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practical people will ultimately change themselves far more radically than their opposites. However it is often not useful to startle them first up with too much esoteric information. Rather it is better to provide them with simple practical steps along the way and they will follow the path sometimes so far that they hardly recognise themselves at the end of it. You will also have noticed that I referred Barbara to Carolyn Myss's book "The Anatomy of the Spirit". Check it out yourself!

It is the energy and the will, which is important and not the specific path one takes. As my teacher Dorothy Hall announced early in my herbal medicine training "Everything is a cure for Cancer and everything is also a cause of Cancer". This is like one of those Zen statements, which you can't understand until you reach a certain level of enlightenment, but it is true.

Treating the Type I and Type II patients therefore is very much the same although they seem poles apart. They both have a problem with caring and the cancer has come because of self-destructive energy flowing from within their own attitudes. It is not always useful to confront a Type II breast cancer patient with all this information in the first session, as you can imagine. In many Type I cases, the same is also true.

As a healer I must provide for my patients what they need at a rate and in a form, which they can work with. Barbara appears to be a rare and rather pure example of a Type I where she already has all the knowledge and understanding of her condition and has already done most of the hard work. She just needed help to put it together into a workable package. She said she still "feels strong but has doubts that she can beat the cancer altogether"

Maybe Barbara also has some Type II influences, history or aspects to her condition also which she didn't share with me, and it really doesn't matter. So far, she has taken charge in an extraordinarily brave manner and she can only become stronger with the treatments and understanding I offer her.

In Conclusion:

I often say to my cancer patients that they should follow the path, which supports their vitality. Last week I told someone to 'follow the yellow brick road'. This sentiment is worth repeating here also.

In taking charge of, and dealing with Cancer we should listen to our own instincts and evaluate our own responses to the treatments we try or are offered and the understandings we gain along the way. In a very short time we become the experts in our own condition and so we should. If we make choices as they open up before us using the simple criteria of following the direction which demonstrates more, rather than less vitality, we are on the right track.

I am not suggesting here that we should all refuse orthodox treatment as Barbara did to this point. There is no question that Radio and Chemotherapy can give cancer cells a hell of a fright. The simple barbarity of the process of submitting our systems to such dreadful poisons may give many people 'permission to get well' as in some primitive initiation ceremony.

What I do suggest however, is that you:

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- Make the decisions yourself and protect yourself against the downside of whichever decisions you make.
- Recognise that a plan, which may be best for you at one stage of your treatment, is not necessarily the best plan for another stage.
- Recognise that a program, which damages your immune system, cannot be a total solution for a problem resulting from a malfunction of that same immune system.
- Continually refer back to the vitality criteria when making decisions as to what to do next or what changes to make in your life.

Once you have got all this sorted out. Get on with living your life and not living your illness.

Bless you.

Robert McDowell
Herbalist
June 2001