

# ***Unconventional Cancer Treatments***

**An information sheet from the Kentucky Council Against Health Fraud  
www.kcahf.org**

## **Overview**

Numerous unconventional forms of cancer treatment are being promoted, many of them in clinics near Tijuana, Mexico.

## **Scientific assessment**

In general, *none of these methods has been shown to be effective*. If one had been shown to work, it would be part of conventional medicine (there is no conspiracy by doctors and the drug industry to suppress effective treatments!). Many of them are based on scientifically invalid ideas. Some have been tested and found not to work. Among the more popular methods are:

*Laetrile* - sometimes called “vitamin B<sub>17</sub>,” but it is not a vitamin. Supposedly goes to cancer cells and releases cyanide to kill them, but no evidence for this. Many studies have shown it doesn’t work. The cyanide can produce toxic effects.

*Shark cartilage* - based on finding of protein factors in cartilage which block blood vessel growth (needed for tumor development). But products would contain only tiny amounts, and they would be broken down in digestion. A clinical trial found no benefit.

*Metabolic therapy, Gerson therapy, Kelley/Gonzalez, Contreras, etc.* - various approaches using fruits and vegetables, vitamins, coffee enemas, pancreatic enzymes, etc. Aim to strengthen body and remove toxins. Inconsistent with knowledge of how cancer progresses; no clinical studies showing they work. Colonic irrigation has no scientific basis and is dangerous (see our separate sheet on this method). Pancreatic enzymes would be digested like other proteins and not reach tumors.

*Macrobiotic diet* - foods selected on Eastern principles to balance *yin* and *yang*. No scientific basis.

*Antineoplastons* (S. Burzynski) - chemicals claimed to “normalize” cancer cells. No evidence in support; Burzynski’s clinical trials are highly flawed.

*Oxygenating therapies (oxygen, ozone, germanium)* - based on the false idea that oxygen is toxic to tumor cells. Ozone can have dangerous side effects.

*Essiac* - herbal remedy. Canadian government reviewed 86 cases and found no benefit.

*Vitamin C* - claimed by Linus Pauling to cure cancer, but two double-blind studies found no benefit.

*Hulda Clark* claims that cancer and other diseases are caused by parasites, and can be diagnosed and cured with electronic devices. These claims are scientifically invalid.

For further information, see:

<http://www.quackwatch.org/00AboutQuackwatch/altseek.html>

(This link will guide you to many articles on specific topics.)

## **But if there is no effective treatment, what is the harm in trying an unconventional approach?**

Some of the drawbacks include: financial costs of paying for useless therapies (why enrich promoters of things which don’t work?); the time and effort involved in seeking out these remedies; the possibility of raising false hope of recovery; and side effects of the treatments. A better option which may be available is to enroll in a clinical trial of a new therapy being developed within scientific medicine.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that cancer patients seek treatment through conventional therapies, or experimental therapies being tested by scientific methods. The unconventional approaches described above should be avoided.

**Recommendations of KCAHF are based on our assessments of the scientific literature concerning unconventional approaches to health care. For specific recommendations concerning your medical condition, consult your physician.**

*For further information, contact KCAHF, 7605 Devondale Ct., Louisville, KY 40222 or send e-mail to: [tjwheeler@louisville.edu](mailto:tjwheeler@louisville.edu)*