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Antioxidants do not interfere with cancer radiation treatments, research finds

by Ben Kage

(NewsTarget) Research by Cancer Treatment Centers of America scientists have found that antioxidants provide nutritional benefits to cancer patients undergoing radiation treatment without interfering with the treatment itself.

The study, entitled "Effect of Concomitant Naturopathic Therapies on Clinical Tumor Response to External Beam Radiation Therapy for Prostate Cancer," was presented this weekend at the non-profit Society of Integrative Oncology's Third International Conference in Boston.

Most doctors feel that [radiation therapy](#), chemotherapy and surgery are the best treatment options for [cancer patients](#), but the side effects of the treatments can be physically and emotionally damaging. So, supporters of complementary and [alternative therapies](#) have sought to improve their patients' post-treatment quality of life through the use of antioxidants.

"In [cancer treatment](#) today, we have to look beyond the traditional focus of treating only the tumor," said Timothy Birdsall, ND, vice president of integrative medicine for Cancer Treatment Centers of [America](#) and lead author of the study.

However, [doctors](#) have long been concerned about antioxidant use with [radiation treatment](#) interfering with the [cancer](#) cell oxidation levels that assist [chemotherapy](#) and radiation in killing tumors. To address this, the Cancer Treatment Centers of America researchers analyzed the prostate specific antigen (PSA) levels of [prostate cancer](#) patients after radiation therapy, and found no difference between the control group and the group using [antioxidants](#) such as green tea extract, melatonin, high-potency multivitamins, vitamin C and vitamin E.

"This study provides evidence that antioxidants as a complementary therapy in cancer treatment do not interfere with external beam radiation therapy," Birdsall said. "Antioxidants are one of many [complementary and alternative medicine](#) therapies that are crucial in today's fight against cancer.

"Cancer patients will be the first to tell you (traditional treatments are) not enough," he said. "The integrated, whole person approach to cancer is highly valued, so much so that cancer patients and their caregivers are seeking out complementary or alternative therapies on their own."

More than 80 percent of the cancer patients interviewed for the report said they had used some sort of complementary and [alternative medicine](#) treatment, many without any sort of medical supervision. This presents a danger, the researchers said, as some may interfere with traditional treatments. St. John's wort, for example, is often taken for depression, but can reportedly reduce the effectiveness of some forms of chemotherapy.

"For years, [oncologists](#) have caused great harm to cancer patients by insisting that they take no antioxidants whatsoever during chemotherapy or radiation treatments," said Mike Adams, a consumer health advocate and holistic nutritionist. "This misguided advice has caused immeasurable harm among cancer patients, and is one reason why conventional medicine's [cancer treatments](#) ultimately kill so many people.

"What we've known for a long time in the natural health community is that boosting [nutrition](#) protects the healthy cells of the body from chemotherapy and radiation without interfering with those therapies," he said. "But bull-headed doctors and oncologists -- who can never admit they

might be wrong -- simply refuse to accept any scientific facts about the value of nutritional supplements."

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