SURVEY ON THE WORLDWIDE CHRONIC MYELOID LEUKEMIA ADVOCATES NETWORK REGARDING COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

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PURPOSE

Many cancer patients use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). According to a recent systematic review, about 40% of cancer patients use CAM (1). Yet, data from recent studies report even higher rates (2,3). Only few publications present data from different countries.

However, data in hematological cancers are lacking on which types of CAM are being used, what information sources on CAM patients use and to what extent CAM is being addressed in the consultation with the hematologist.

METHODS

In order to collect a set of data from all over the world, an online questionnaire was developed which was sent to the representatives of patient advocates groups in the CML Advocates Network that connects CML patient organizations in 55 countries on all continents.

The questionnaire was developed on the basis of a questionnaire established by an expert group of the working group Prevention and Integrative Oncology (PRIO) of the German Cancer Society.

Focus was set on three main topics:
1. Setting of conventional therapy in the different countries - access to modern treatments
2. Relevance of CAM – providers of information and treatment - reasons to use CAM - discussion with the oncologist
3. Type of CAM used

RESULTS

A total of 53 leaders of patients’ advocacy groups for chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) patients from 35 countries responded to the survey. In almost all countries, CAM is important for CML patients and is widely used in addition to conventional leukemia treatment. Mostly, patients have to pay by themselves. General practitioners, herbalists, healers and naturopaths are the main sources for CAM treatments.

Information on CAM is derived most frequently from the Internet, and family and friends, but rarely provided by the oncologist. Disclosure of CAM use to the oncologist is low, but increases if oncologists offer CAM.

CONCLUSION

In spite of very different health care systems, the features of CAM usage are similar in the different countries. We suggest extending the cooperation of selfhelp and scientists in order to provide training of oncologists on CAM and quality-controlled, evidence-based information on CAM on the Internet both for patients as well as health professionals as a promising strategy to increase safe use of CAM in patients with CML.

REFERENCES

