

A Model **Integrative Medicine** Program

How St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute funds and staffs its full-service program

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Today our healthcare industry faces a huge challenge. At a time when our government and payers are pressuring providers to move more and more patients through the healthcare system at a faster rate, our patients want just the opposite. Patients are asking for more time, more options, more education, more opportunities to help heal themselves, and for an overall feeling of empowerment and control over their treatment.

Because most integrative medicine modalities are not reimbursed by either Medicare or most private payers, funding for an integrative medicine program is a primary concern. Offering services free of charge can help determine patient interest, which can in turn help forecast the future

need for integrative medicine services. However, if your program's budget will not support offering these services free of charge, monies from grants or fundraisers may help you begin a program. Once patient interest is established, you may also look into offering some of the programs on a fee-for-service basis.

The Integrative Medicine Program at St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute (MSTI) in Boise, Idaho, offers some integrative medicine services free of charge. Others are offered on a fee-for-service basis, although this amount does not always cover the cost of the providers. In some cases, we have found that patients have a vested interest in attending and continuing an activity if they have had to pay for the service.

Our Integrative Medicine Program at St. Luke's began with the help of many volunteers. While we continue to rely heavily on volunteer support, our Integrative Medicine Program has pursued other funding options over the years including grants, fundraisers, and the hospital's auxiliary foundation.

For any cancer program developing or thinking about developing an integrative medicine program, communicating to hospital administration about the effects the program has on patient care and quality of life is imperative. That being said, integrative medicine can be difficult to

In·te·gra·tive med·i·cine *n.* medicine that combines mainstream medical therapies and complementary and alternative medicine therapies for which there is some high-quality scientific evidence of safety and effectiveness.¹ All aspects of well-being and health, including the mind, body, and spirit, are at the heart of integrative medicine today.

To create string art, the patient dips string into black ink and randomly draws the string across white paper. Each image created has special significance to the patient, which can be explored. The art piece is then finished with watercolor paints.



research because so much of it is subjective. Continuously doing patient surveys and questionnaires to learn how these services have helped and what services patients are interested in receiving are two key ways to show administration and staff the value and success of an integrative medicine program. Keeping track of volunteer time and productivity will also provide support when asking for budget dollars.

An Integrative Medicine Program Grows in Idaho

At St. Luke's MSTI we believe that integrative medicine therapies can help meet the needs of patients and their families, as well as supplement state-of-the-art, conventional oncology treatments.

Our Integrative Medicine Program started as a pilot project in 1999. The first service offered was yoga. The two-fold objective was simple: evaluate community response to and interest in integrative therapies and begin to educate staff, patients, and the community about integrative medicine.

Today the Integrative Medicine Program at St. Luke's includes yoga, Art and Healing, Qi Gong (a school of exercise), meditation and guided imagery, massage, music therapy, nutrition, support groups, spiritual care, and writing. Our program is also able to provide some integrative medicine outreach activities. The programs, which are held at different St. Luke's MSTI facilities, are scheduled at various times throughout the year.

While our Integrative Medicine Program has grown, our staff is still small, consisting of a medical director, who is also in full-time practice at our medical oncology clinic; two massage therapists; two yoga instructors; and one Qi Gong instructor. Additional staff participate in the Integrative Medicine Program including social workers, chemotherapy nurses, primary care nurses, and administrative assistants. These staff members also maintain full-time positions within St. Luke's clinics. *In fact, without the staff's generous commitment to and belief in integrative medicine, we would not be able to offer all the services that we do.*

In 2004 we submitted a budget to St. Luke's for the Integrative Medicine Program. This budget included a part-time coordinator position; professional fees for contracted practitioners; and supplies for art, music therapy, and printing costs. The amount provided to us was just under \$10,000, excluding the part-time coordinator. A similar budget was submitted for 2005, with an increase in contract labor. Because all integrative medicine services are provided on St. Luke's property, the program incurs no cost for space rental. This arrangement has been a tremendous help to the pro-

gram, as well as allowing patients convenient access to the program's offerings.

In growing our Integrative Medicine Program, we found one key is using available resources. For example, when we introduce a new integrative program, we draw on our long-established, active support groups for potential participants. We also invite staff members to experience new activities and then provide feedback. This process not only promotes staff well-being, it helps educate and familiarize staff with our integrative medicine services. This, in turn, helps with the referral process.

We educate patients about our services in a variety of ways. For example, our nursing staff, physicians, and social work staff help get the word out to patients who could benefit from our integrative medicine services. We also distribute flyers on upcoming events to our clinics and periodically advertise in local newspapers. Community events offer a great opportunity to market our program. We have a booth at the local Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure event, the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, National Cancer Survivors Day, and other conferences that support healthcare and encourage mind-body medicine. Staff members have also been invited to speak at conferences regarding our Integrative Medicine Program and its benefits for patients and family members.

Our hospital marketing department works with the program on everything from the creation of flyers and posters to providing assistance with community events.

In the end, however, we have found that patients are our best referral source. Because word-of-mouth referrals are so powerful, we encourage patients to talk to each other about the benefits they experienced from participating in an integrative medicine activity. In the lobby of our clinic or in the chemotherapy suite, it is not unusual to hear patients talking about the yoga class they participated in or the relaxing massage they received just before their treatment. The staunch support of our patients is truly what keeps the program going.

For the Benefit of Patients

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer exposes patients to many psychological stressors that can be debilitating. Stress, anxiety, depression, and anger are very common in cancer patients. The Integrative Medicine Program at St. Luke's MSTI offers mental, physical, and spiritual benefits to its patients.

Integrative medicine modalities can provide patients with a sense of empowerment that they can control some aspect of their treatment and see benefits. For example, yoga has been shown to significantly reduce stressors through deep breathing and relaxation techniques for the mind and body, and to increase energy. Many cancer

Integrative Medicine in Practice: First Person Stories

patients are told to exercise, but are too fatigued to actually attempt this kind of activity. Yoga can provide these patients with an opportunity to reclaim some balance and strength both physically and mentally.

Integrative medicine modalities can also enhance the immune system so patients can continue treatment with fewer side effects and begin to regain strength and vitality after treatment is over.² Yoga, massage, and acupuncture have the potential to affect many of the side effects that conventional medical treatment can induce, such as nausea and fatigue. For example, massage can help eliminate the toxins that can increase in a patient's body as a result of chemotherapy. Massage also improves blood circulation and blood pressure, both of which play a part in cancer-related nausea and fatigue. When properly taught, patients can learn to self-massage to help increase circulation and reduce lymphedema-related swelling.²

Research has shown that making music has physiological as well as psychological benefits to cancer patients,³ and the St. Luke's MSTI Melodies is a unique part of our Integrative Medicine Program. A musical ensemble comprised of cancer patients, caregivers, and staff, the group sings and performs together for the community. Participants report that participating in choral music has helped stimulate coping mechanisms and reduced stress throughout their cancer treatment plan.

Art and Healing is another key part of our Integrative Medicine Program. Patient artwork, including brightly colored mandalas, painted masks, watercolor ink designs, string art, and assorted collages, are displayed throughout our oncology clinics. Pediatric and adult patient art is also on view at local American Cancer Society events, such as National Cancer Survivors Day, Pink Day, and Relay for Life.

In the years since our Integrative Medicine Program began, we have seen firsthand how important these modalities are to our patients with cancer. We have also seen nationwide interest in integrative medicine grow as more and more cancer centers around the country offer truly comprehensive care. In 2003, the Society for Integrative Oncology was formed as a multidisciplinary organization for the study of complementary therapies. The Society provides information and education about integrative therapies, including scientific studies/validity, therapeutic benefits, risks, and limitations to patients, family members, caregivers and oncology professionals. With the increasing popularity of complementary medicine services, physicians, patients, and the general public must have access to information that distinguishes the dangers of alternative therapies (e.g., unproven therapies that are used *in place* of standard medical treatments) and complementary medicine (e.g., treatments that are used *along with* standard medical treatments). Integrative medicine strives for a total approach to care that involves the patient's mind, body, and spirit. Integrative medicine combines standard medicine with complementary medicine modalities that have shown the most promise. For more information, go to <http://www.integrativeonc.org>.

Today, the mission of the St. Luke's MSTI Integrative Medicine Program is to offer patients, family members, and staff complementary therapies within a state-of-the-art, conventional oncology healthcare practice. Our objectives have expanded to include:

Circle of Friends

Early in our Integrative Medicine Program's development, oncology social worker, Margo Anneke, LCSW, traveled to rural Oregon to meet a pediatric patient and a group of her closest friends. This 16-year-old patient was faced with recurrent disease, and the prognosis was terminal. Anneke engaged the girls in art projects to help cope with anticipatory grief and loss. The girls made collages to illustrate the history of their friendship, which for some went as far back as kindergarten.

Together the girls painted masks to reflect how abruptly their worlds had changed coping with a devastating illness (see photo at left). Gathered into a circle, the girls shared stories about the significance of each art piece they had created. Surprisingly, amidst laughter, sorrowful glances and tears were few. The young cancer patient's mother was even able to videotape these heartfelt moments that would soon become part of her daughter's legacy.

The artwork created that day—collages, watercolor string art, and masks—hung in a bedside "gallery" and continued to illustrate loving friendship and provide tranquil comfort until the young girl died.



Mask making reflects the introspective, personal journey through cancer treatment. It is another art experience offering by the MSTI Integrative Medicine Program.

A Collage of Comfort

After receiving news of a third breast cancer recurrence, one St. Luke's Mountain States Tumor Institute patient was referred to Anneke for the management of anxiety and depression. The social worker suggested collage making as an opportunity for the patient to experience the relaxation response.

- Reducing stress and anxiety for patients and staff involved in oncology care
- Offering complementary therapies to enhance coping and well-being while undergoing the challenges of cancer treatment
- Allowing patients the opportunity to take a more active role in their medical care
- Acknowledging the spiritual needs of patients, family members, and staff
- Disseminating information and education regarding the therapeutic benefits of mind/body medicine
- Evaluating the benefits of complementary therapies in oncology through randomized trials

Initially the patient was somewhat unreceptive to art therapy. Anneke assured her that no art experience was necessary and that emphasis is placed on the therapeutic benefits of the process, not on the final product. Eventually the patient began collaging using an assortment of magazines and focusing on images and words that would create a visual representation of herself beyond the experience of cancer. She returned for additional visits to “collage” the emotional trauma and illustrate the magnitude of her anger and fear.

Eventually the woman invited her husband to join in a healing art appointment, acknowledging the stress of the cancer on their marriage. Together they created collages that reflected mutual interests and activities that had been all but forgotten since the cancer. For this patient, collage-making reduced the all-encompassing focus of cancer, and helped replace high-level anxiety with relaxation and calm. Even better, the patient was released from the hospital the same day that she had surgery for a bi-lateral mastectomy.



Creating collages provides patients with an opportunity to transform some of the stressors associated with the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

- Empowering patients to have control over their treatment with the most up-to-date information available.

Cancer affects all aspects of a patient’s life—mental, physical, and spiritual. Integrative medicine has the potential to enhance patients’ quality of life in many ways. At St. Luke’s Mountain States Tumor Institute, our patients and their families benefit from having an integrative medicine program within our clinic and from having physicians who are willing to accept these modalities. 📌

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Elysa’s Legacy

Anneke met nine-year-old Elysa, who was newly diagnosed with a very aggressive cancer, at Camp Rainbow Gold, a camp for children who have been or are being treated for cancer. Run by the American Cancer Society, the five-day program is free of charge, and all the counselors, doctors, and nurses donate their time.

For Elysa, Camp Rainbow Gold brought to life a love of string art. And even after the camp ended and Elysa’s declining health kept her from attending school, the young girl retained her interest in art. Soon arrangements were made for her to participate in healing art activities

with Anneke. Together they created collages and completed a series of string art pictures.

It has been two years since Elysa’s death; however, Elysa’s artwork, including the work she titled “Self Portrait”

has deeply touched many hearts. A lithograph print of her string art was the last item to be auctioned at the joint fundraising efforts of Camp Rainbow Gold and the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Elysa’s father tearfully introduced the piece and shared the circumstances surrounding its creation. The print was auctioned off for \$10,000 and immediately donated back. It raised an additional \$7,500 in a second round of bidding. When the auction concluded, Elysa’s artwork was donated back to Camp Rainbow Gold where it hangs honoring her memory.

Art heals in surprising and wonderful ways, touching the hearts of our patients, families, and communities throughout Idaho. The generosity of Elysa’s community will once again make a difference to children faced with devastating illness. 📌



Nine-year-old Elysa’s lithograph print artwork, titled “Self Portrait.”

and Margo Anneke, LCSW, is an oncology social worker at St. Luke’s Mountain States Tumor Institute in Boise, Idaho.

References

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