

An Effective Mental Health Intervention for Stress Management

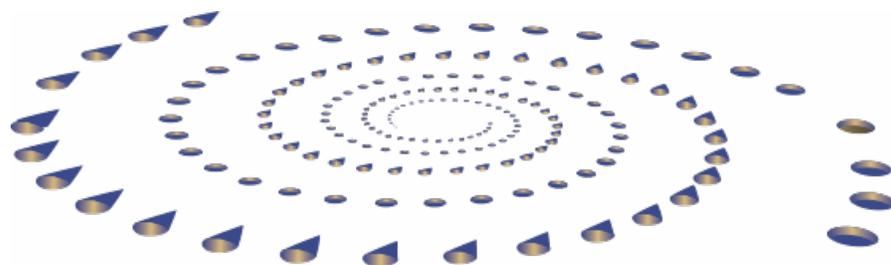
Advancing the PATH Method as a Stress Management Tool for Cancer Patients

Background: Stress is the critical factor in all - mental health issues as well as in many other chronic illnesses, including cancer. The linkages between stress and cancer are well established: stress can trigger cancer development, exacerbate cancer and reduce survival rates (1,2,3). Stress management is therefore a significant factor in supporting mental health in cancer patients. Despite these clear linkages, medical practitioners are generally not trained or equipped to diagnose and manage stress as an essential part of cancer treatment. This is particularly problematic because physiological and psychological stress during mainstream treatment can further limit best treatment outcomes.

Goal: Holistic cancer treatments have been shown to improve patient experience, wellbeing and strengthen patient/practitioner relationships (4). Given the increase in cancer globally, it is critical that medical systems and their practitioners are enabled to provide oncological treatment that incorporates mental health and emotional wellbeing into the healing process (5). This requires effective methods for medical practitioners to diagnose and treat stress in situ. More systematically, these holistic methods need to be validated, and mainstreamed into the medical system by training medical practitioners in these scientifically tested approaches and techniques.

Leadership: Dr. Raoul Goldberg is a leader in the field of holistic medicine, developing and administering innovative approaches to cancer treatment for 35 years. Dr. Goldberg is the founder of the PATH (Participatory Awareness for Transformational Healing) Method, a psycho-medical modality that empowers both patient and health practitioner to release and resolve emotional and physical stress. The PATH Method has been well received by the international medical community and has been used extensively to treat mental health issues in cancer patients at the Path to Health Centre in Cape Town, South Africa.

Dr. Dwight McKee, co-author of the study and papers, is a Board Certified in Medical, hematology, nutrition and integrative and holistic medicine. Dr. McKee has worked with patients in the context of practicing complementary medicine with an emphasis on nutritional and mind body medicine. Currently he has clinical trials and studies in Europe and the USA. He Co-authored *After Cancer Care: The Definitive Self-Care Guide to Getting and Staying Well for Patient's after Cancer*. He edited the *Cancer Strategies Journal* from 2011 to 2014.



Project: This project involves a clinical trial of the PATH Method with cancer patients, utilizing four validated stress biomarkers to measure how the psyche affects physiology. In the project's second phase, the researchers will publish findings, implement a pilot to test approaches of teaching the PATH Method with a select cohort of doctors.

Objectives: To document evidence of PATH Method effectiveness, and validate its application in medical practice. To develop a teaching tool for knowledge sharing and dissemination.

Phase 1: Scientifically test the PATH Method through a randomized, empirical research study with 60 cancer patients. This clinical trial will measure the impact of the PATH Method on physiological and psychological stress levels using a combination of biomarkers, evaluating the linkage between mental health and physiology in cancer patients. Publicly share findings from the research study through peer review journal articles.

Phase 2: Develop approaches to teaching the PATH Method, piloted with a cohort of doctors in South Africa.

This project paves the way for mainstreaming holistic health approaches, such as the PATH Method, into medical practice. Participatory holistic approaches offer powerful levers for returning Care back into Healthcare, empowering both the physician and the patient through a process of mutual healing. A strong healthcare system contributes to stable, healthy individuals and communities, decreased costs, and reduction in mortalities.

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