Unproven Methods of Cancer Management

Gerson Method of Treatment for Cancer

The following statement was recently distributed to the 57 Divisions of the American Cancer Society for their information.

After careful review of the literature and other available information, the American Cancer Society does not have evidence that treatment of cancer in humans by the Gerson method results in any objective benefit. The following is a summation of information contained in the American Cancer Society files as of August, 1972.

Gerson’s method of treatment for cancer was essentially dietary and was based on: (1) detoxification of the whole body; (2) providing essential contents of the potassium group; and (3) adding oxidizing enzymes continuously as long as they are not reactivated and built in the body (in the form of green leaf juice and fresh calf’s liver juice). This creates a near normal condition of the oxidizing system of the body, to which malignant cells with the fermentation system cannot adapt.\(^1\) The diet was said to make the body highly hypersensitive, so that ordinary anesthesia might be fatal, a conjecture that is wholly unfounded and apparently designed to appeal to the cancer victim who is already fearful of a surgical operation.\(^2\) "To the layman...it makes sense because it views the problem in the ‘concept of totality,’ placing emphasis on the deteriorated metabolism as a whole with the liver as the central organ."\(^3\)

The detailed ‘diet’ proposed by Dr. Max Gerson consisted essentially of restriction of all foods other than uncanned fresh fruits and vegetables and oatmeal. He forbade the use of aluminum utensils and pressure cookers in the preparation of food and also forbade the use of salt, spices, sodium bicarbonate, alcohol and tobacco. After the first six weeks proteins from milk products were added along with fat soluble Vitamin A and D. Medication includes niacin, brewer’s yeast, fresh defatted bile in capsules, liver and iron capsules, dicalcium phosphate and viosterol, injections of crude liver extract intramuscularly, Lugol’s solution and thyroid extract. All vegetables were chopped up and made into juice employing the use of a machine which was made available to patients for approximately $150.\(^3\) Dr. Gerson also advocated the use of enemas, including coffee enemas, to produce at least one copious bowel movement per day.

**Background**

Dr. Max Bernard Gerson was born in Wongrowitz, Germany in 1881. He graduated from the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität...
Another young boy was taken to Dr. Gerson by his parents after an amputation had been advised for a bone tumor. Following a prolonged stay at the nursing home under treatment by Dr. Gerson, the youngster returned home in a pitiable state of malnutrition and died shortly thereafter.  

Although Dr. Max Gerson died March 8, 1959 from pneumonia, there continues to be a great deal of interest in his method of treatment of cancer. Numerous articles keep appearing in various health magazines, such as Prevention and Herald of Health. The March/April 1972 issue of the Cancer News Journal, published by the International Association of Cancer Victims and Friends, Inc., depicts the "Gerson Cancer Therapy" on its cover and contains a reprint of the original article published in the Herald of Health, October 1958, describing Gerson's cancer therapy. A recent issue of the Cancer News Journal indicated that information concerning the Gerson cancer therapy can be obtained from Mrs. Charlotte Straus, Gerson's daughter and clinic associate, 71-40 112th Street, Forest Hills, Queens, New York. Mrs. Straus currently lectures on the Gerson cancer therapy at various meetings throughout the country which are sponsored by the I.A.C.V.F. and currently advertised by flyers posted in various New York health food stores.

Publications

"A Cancer Therapy: Results of Fifty Cases," by Dr. Max Gerson, published by Whittier Books, Inc., New York, New York, May 1958, 402 pp., $8.50.

Dr. Gerson's book has been translated into German and was published in Germany in February 1961. A Gerson Foundation was also organized in Vienna, Austria, to support this work and spread its knowledge.

In 1965 this book was reissued as "A Cancer Therapy" by Dura Books, Inc.,
New York, New York. The officers of this publishing firm, Dura Books, include Dr. Gerson’s widow, Mrs. Margaret Gerson, as president, and his three daughters, Mrs. Johanna Oberlander, vice-president, Mrs. Gertrude Selten, treasurer, and Mrs. Charlotte R. Strauss. The book was distributed by Groton Press, Inc., Brooklyn, New York. In paperback it is distributed by the I.A.C.V.F. “Has Dr. Max Gerson a True Cancer Cure?” by S. J. Haught, is also distributed as a paperback for 60 cents by I.A.C.V.F.

The Foundation for Cancer Treatment, Inc., 80-24 Austin Street, Kew Gardens, New York. Little is known about this foundation except that it is a nonprofit organization formed many years ago by grateful patients for the purpose of continuing the Gerson method of treatment for cancer. They distributed reprints and offered Dr. Gerson’s book to libraries, colleges, physicians and patients at reduced prices.

Proponents

The Gerson Method of treatment for cancer was used by Bernard Jensen, D.C., owner and operator of the Hidden Valley Health Resort, Escondido, California.7

Among Dr. Gerson’s proponents are his three daughters, Mrs. Charlotte R. Strauss, Mrs. Johanna Oberlander and Mrs. Gertrude Selten.

Dr. Lance Vallan, 245 East 72nd Street, New York City, was reported to be interested in treating patients with the Gerson method in early 1960. Dr. Vallan was born in 1916, received his medical degree from the University of Komenského, Lekarske Fakulte, Bratislava in Czechoslovakia in 1940. He was licensed to practice medicine in New York in 1955 and is in general practice. His specialty is listed as biochemistry.8

In 1963 George V. Kroll, an osteopath, on staff at Hilton House, Pinebrook, New Jersey, was reported to be using the Gerson method of treatment for cancer. Later it was reported that the osteopathic society to which he belonged requested him to discontinue this type of treatment.9

Information received from Mrs. Johanna Oberlander, Dr. Gerson’s daughter, stated that in early 1960 a Dr. Gokcen, Director of Research, Glenwood Hills Hospital, Golden Valley Road, Minneapolis, Minnesota, was also interested in using the Gerson method of treatment for cancer.9

A leading proponent of the Gerson method of treatment for cancer was Anna S. Kleegman Daniels, M.D., of New York City.10 Dr. Daniels was born in 1892, received her medical degree from the Cornell University Medical College in 1916 and was licensed to practice medicine in New York in 1916. She was in full-time practice as a specialist in gynecology and was a member of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She was on staff of the Hospital for Special Surgery, the New York Infirmary and Bellevue Hospital until her death on March 22, 1971.

Investigation

In 1946 the Gerson method of treatment for cancer was supported by the Robinson Foundation for Cancer Research, 14 Wall Street, New York, New York. In 1944 this foundation, which was actually financed by two business enterprises, the Hatfield Wire and Cable Company and Willin Davit and Boat Company, both of Amboy, New Jersey, incorporated under a provision of the revenue code for educational institutions to exempt the organization from federal taxes. Following a year’s trial and evaluation of Gerson’s method of treatment for cancer, the foundation reported the project had been discontinued in 1947.11

The Gerson method of treatment for cancer has changed only slightly over the years. It is described in detail in two issues of the Journal of the American
Medical Association as follows:
J. A. M. A. 132: 645-646, 1946 and
J. A. M. A. 139: 93-98, 1949. It was concluded that this method of treatment for cancer was of no value.

In 1947 the National Cancer Institute reviewed 10 cases selected by Dr. Gerson. The Institute concluded that the report was not convincing. 11

In 1947 a committee appointed by the Committee on Cancer of the New York County Medical Society reviewed records of 86 patients, and examined 10 patients; it failed to find any scientific evidence of any value in this method for the treatment of cancer. 12

The Madison Foundation for Bio-

chemical Research, 11 East 74th Street, New York City, formed in March 1947, sponsored an evaluation made during 1948-49 of the findings observed in cases of cancer treated with the Gerson cancer therapy. In April 1950 the foundation reported that insufficient evidence had been presented to warrant any claims that the Gerson method of treatment was a cure for cancer. Dr. Gerson resigned from this foundation on April 1, 1950. 12

Dr. Gerson’s malpractice insurance was discontinued in 1953 13 and on March 4, 1958 he was suspended for a period of two years from the New York County Medical Society. 14

References

1. Cancer News Journal, March/April 1972.
2. Cancer and the need for facts. J. A. M. A. 139: 93-98, 1949. p. 96.
3. Fishbein, M.: History of cancer quackery. Perspectives in Biology and Medicine 8: 139-166 (Winter), 1965.
4. Gerson’s cancer treatment. J. A. M. A. 132: 645-646, 1946.
5. Matchan, D.: Dr. Gerson’s cancer therapy. Herald of Health, October 1958.
6. Letters, April 22, 1953 from Charles S. Cameron, M.D., American Cancer Society to Robert F. Murphy, Executive Director, Rhode Island Cancer Society; and April 23, 1953 from James H. Brothers III, M.D. to Charles S. Cameron, M.D.
7. Letter, February 7, 1961 from K. F. Ernst, M.D., Head of Cancer Diagnosis and Therapy Evaluation Unit, State of California, Department of Health, to American Cancer Society.
8. Herald of Health, December 1960.
9. National Better Business Bureau, Inc. Confidential File Memorandum, from Irving Ladimer, Vice-President.
10. Letter, May 31, 1968 from Ethel Thurson, Ph.D., Chairman, Department of Music History, Manhattan School of Music to Mrs. Virginia H. Whitney, Reader’s Digest.
11. Letter, November 7, 1951 from Isabel M. Wason, M.D., Committee on Cancer Diagnosis and Therapy to Dr. R. S. Westphal, Chairman, Public Health Committee, Sonoma (California) County Medical Society.
12. Letter, April 18, 1950 from George P. Miley, M.D., Chairman, Medical Advisory Board, Madison Foundation for Biochemical Research to the American Medical Association.
13. Letter, February 8, 1954 from Christopher Wood, M.D. to Dr. John A. Garlock, President, Medical Society of the County of New York.
14. Letter, June 24, 1958 from Scott Hill, M.D., Director, Professional Education, American Cancer Society to Oliver Field, American Medical Association.