

Results of Integrative Breast Cancer Treatment Program Announced

12-year study shows doubling of life expectancy

EVANSTON, IL -- The July/August issue of *The Breast Journal* has published survival data for a group of 90 metastatic breast cancer patients. The study was conducted by the Block Center for Integrative Cancer Treatment. The women, diagnosed before 1998, participated in a comprehensive clinical program that combined conventional treatments—surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation—with individualized nutrition and supplementation, as well as fitness and mind-spirit regimens.

Through the 1990s, median survival reported in metastatic breast cancer trials or observations ranged on average from 12 to 24 months. Median survival for Block Center consecutive case series patients was 38 months, and their five-year survival was 27%, versus 17% for comparison patients. Published literature on populations with more favorable prognostic factors treated in conventional clinics showed median survivals of 20 to 23 months. Statistical analyses were performed by faculty at the University of Illinois at Chicago, while researchers from Bar-Ilan University and other institutions contributed to data interpretation.

Survival of metastatic breast cancer patients at the Block Center was approximately double that of comparison populations, and possibly even higher compared to several randomized trials published during this period. It would appear that the advantage relative to just conventional treatment alone stems from the individually-tailored nutritional, nutraceutical, exercise and psychosocial interventions in the Center's program.

In addition to age and occurrence of relapses, several other factors, not typically assessed in conventional settings, can impact survival in breast cancer patients, among them: body weight, psychosocial distress with elevated catecholamines, cortisol, inflammatory and oxidative mediators, diet and physical activity. Randomized trials of single-agent therapies or one-dimensional interventions appear inadequate to address this complexity, and there is a need for new clinical models to research and test whole systems interventions, such as the integrative care program at the Block Center.

New cancer drugs are routinely approved for extending survival for 2 to 3 months," said Dr. Keith I. Block, medical and scientific director of the Block Center." "There currently is no drug that has demonstrated the potential to double the life expectancy of metastatic breast cancer patients, as evidenced in these findings. These data are another compelling argument for conducting further research into an integrative treatment model for cancer.

"Our statistics were derived from our community-based patient population. While our group was comparable on major prognostic factors, we had a higher proportion of relapsed and younger patients (the median age at onset of metastasis was 46 years) than the comparison patients, which usually means a poorer prognosis. One would have expected worse survival rates, but that is the opposite of what we saw."

Dr. Azra Raza, Director of the Myelodysplastic Syndrome Center, St. Vincent's Comprehensive Cancer Center, New York, characterized the Block Center's comprehensive, integrative program as "superior." "This evidence-based integrative approach should serve as a wake-up call for oncologists to overcome their obsession with treating cancer as an isolated target, but rather pay attention to the cancer patient whose own faculties need to be harnessed as agencies to win this war."

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The Block Center for Integrative Cancer Treatment, located in Evanston, Illinois, was founded in 1980 by Penny and Keith Block, MD. The Center's research-based treatment integrates an innovative approach to the best of conventional medicine with scientifically sound complementary therapies – therapeutic nutrition, botanical and phytonutrient supplementation, prescriptive exercise, and systematic mind-body strategies – to enhance the recovery process.

Dr. Block is Director of Integrative Medical Education at the College of Medicine at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a member of the National Cancer Institute's PDQ Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Editorial Board in Bethesda, MD. The Block Center regularly participates in industry-sponsored clinical trials of new drugs, large-scale drug monitoring studies, and research on medical communication and patient perception. The Center's research staff has participated in laboratory and clinical research projects with investigators from a number of universities and clinical centers, including the University of Illinois at Chicago, Bar-Ilan University in Israel, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. The Block Center is currently the only private North American medical center using chronomodulated chemotherapy.