

Chemotherapy: Myths and Facts

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Due to its success rate and efficacy, chemotherapy has traditionally been the only method that oncologists and doctors across the globe prescribe for their patients afflicted with cancer. While chemotherapy is an advanced method of medical treatment that helps wipe out cancer at the cellular level, there are many myths surrounding the procedure. One common myth about chemotherapy is that it is able to target only the cancerous cells of the body. The truth about chemotherapy is that while the anticancer drugs employed in chemotherapy are cancer killers that are primarily geared toward attacking the DNA and enzymes of the diseased cells to inhibit their rapid spread and growth, these drugs are not designed to target only the cancerous cells exclusively. The fact that the most common side effect of chemotherapy is hair loss illustrates the truth about chemotherapy: Chemotherapy does not attack cancer cells alone. It is a “cell killing” treatment that is targeted toward impairing the growth of cells that multiply rapidly. As the follicular cells in the hair also belong to the same category, chemotherapy causes extensive hair loss.

Another myth about chemotherapy concerns its availability as a standardized treatment. Chemotherapy is a well-researched and well-studied science that involves a wide array of drug therapies that may be used for different reasons, either alone or in combination with other treatment methods in combinatorial chemotherapy. Customized and personalized chemotherapy is available to all patients.

Pain and fatigue are the other myths about chemotherapy. While oral medication is prescribed during the first two days to help patients cope with nausea and discomfort, there is no evidence to suggest that the patient finds the process painful. The facts about chemotherapy are that people feel tired and depleted of energy with time due to the cumulative effects of the treatment program.

Another myth about chemotherapy is that the more chemotherapy you get, the better it is. The truth about chemotherapy is: It is not about the duration of chemotherapy but the right combination of drugs and their dosage that decides the efficacy of the treatment. A higher dosage does not guarantee a faster recovery or promise the prevention of a recurrent episode. There is an upper limit to the dosage that the body can effectively cope with. The “no pain no gain” theory is among the common myths about chemotherapy. While some people respond to the treatment very badly, others may have very few side effects. The facts about chemotherapy are that younger patients have a smaller nausea threshold and tend to feel a lot sicker when compared with older patients.

Myths and facts about chemotherapy revolve around depleting energy levels and increased exhaustion. One of the facts about chemotherapy is that doctors and nurses also give their patients supportive medications to help them cope with the side effects of chemotherapy.

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