Experiences and Wishes from Danish Cancer Children and their Families Regarding CAM*

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Background:
Around 200 Danish children are diagnosed with cancer every year (population: 5.5 million). The majority is affected by leukemia, brain tumors, lymphomas, kidney cancer and neuroblastoma. Effective treatment options are offered and many children regain their health. But it is a long process. The treatments are associated with physical, mental and social side effects. Therefore many of the families choose to supplement the conventional treatment with Complementary and Alternative Medicine, CAM*

The Danish Association for Cancer Children FCB is an independent support group, working for cancer children and their families, organizing life-affirming activities. For the past 5 years family weekends has, along with other life affirming activities, been giving possibilities to share experiences regarding CAM.

With this background, and inspired by giving reflexology to 500 family members and visiting children’s hospitals in Israel, Spain and China, where CAM is offered to cancer children during hospitalization, and through meetings with researchers from around the world, this survey came to life.

Purpose of the Study:
To illuminate Danish children with cancer and their families’ experiences and wishes regarding CAM – and to develop a model for data collection, with the possibility to be used in other countries as well.

Methods:
An exploratory approach using mixed methods was done in two phases:

Phase One:
Focus group consisting of families to children with cancer. Exchange of experiences based on 7 questions regarding traditional/conventional treatments and CAM.

Phase Two:
Completion of an anonymous questionnaire, also containing 7 questions.

Results:
With a representation of 51 families to cancer children, 26 questionnaires were filed in and returned by the families. A selection of figures is presented in this poster.

Conclusion:
Families to children with cancer have experiences with CAM and want access to sober objective user information. They want the possibility to receive reflexology massage and other CAM treatments during hospitalizations and while they are socially isolated at home. Many families wish to see CAM being integrated within the health services as a supplement to conventional treatment.

We hope that this pilot study will inspire for an increase of interest of doing research in the field of CAM, so it’s possible to get more knowledge about which CAM treatments work and why they work, especially regarding Cancer Children and families’ experiences, wishes and needs.

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