

Bowenwork for People Living With Cancer
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Cancer is a disease that affects all societies around the globe. With so much financial, medical and scientific research resources focused on ‘finding the cure for cancer’, and no clear result in sight, one has to wonder if medicine is approaching this quest from the best angle. Thousands of researchers worldwide are employed in the medical/pharmaceutical industry to find and create curative treatments and drug compounds. Approximately thirty-two Nobel Laureates have received Nobel Prizes for cancer research. Billions of dollars are spent each year, and yet this disease has not been eradicated. Why not? One reason is - reductionism - the biomedical view of trying to isolate and target specific molecular pathways to develop curative treatments, without understanding that cancer, and cancer-treatment, requires a holistic biologic approach, not a one-system/cure-fits-all.

A holistic model addresses the complexities of host-disease-drug interactions and offers personalized therapies that boost the immune system’s ability to activate it’s own defense against cancer cell replication. Factors affecting the microenvironment of the host and cancerous tumours are finally becoming the focus of cancer-research. It is crucial that healthcare professionals develop deeply individualized integrative and patient-specific interventions, aimed at supporting the intrinsic resources within clients’ bodies, to mount their personal best defense against cancer proliferation, surviving cancer treatments and returning to wellness.



Bowenwork is a holistic technique that facilitates the body’s innate ability to heal itself, yet students and practitioners have often asked me if there could be a risk of Bowenwork “spreading” cancer by enhancing blood circulation and lymphatic flow.

Bowenwork does not spread cancer!

On the contrary, Bowenwork can help people with compromised lymphatic and circulatory systems, and support them in coping with and recovering from their treatments (Hansen, 2012). There is no evidence that Bowenwork, a gentle, soft-tissue relaxation technique (or massage, and other *gentle* bodywork) applied correctly, will facilitate the spread of cancer (Collinge, MacDonald & Walton, 2012; Cancer Council NSW, 2014). Lymphatic circulation is enhanced by the action of involuntary smooth muscle-, and skeletal muscle-contraction. If circulation enhancement was a causative

factor in spreading cancer metastases, then so, too, would exercise, walking up and down stairs, or taking hot showers or baths (Collinge et al., 2012).



Compassionate touch is essential for humans to thrive emotionally, physically and mentally, especially during illness and times of distress. It reduces pain, tension, nausea, anxiety and physical discomfort, and improves self-esteem, a sense of wellbeing and calm. Bowen Therapy, is recommended by the Cancer Council of New South Wales (Australia) for people with cancer as: “a gentle style of touch (that) may help promote relaxation and reduce pain. Through gentle touching and the movement of soft tissue and muscles, the body feels deeply relaxed” [The Cancer Council of NSW (CCNSW), 2014].

Bowenwork can improve the quality of life for people living with cancer, with consideration for their special needs and vulnerabilities. Compassionate Bowenwork practitioners can help clients’ experiences be less isolating through their treatments, apply gentle procedures to support recovery, and create deep, healing connections to give clients a sense of pleasure, hope and being ‘whole’ again. Reports of Bowenwork’s efficacy in optimizing health and wellbeing are compelling, and it is no wonder that practitioners and clients alike are drawn to Bowenwork’s potential for helping people living with cancer.



References:

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2. Collinge, W., MacDonald, G. & Walton, T. (2012). Massage in Supportive Cancer Care. *Seminars in Oncology Nursing*, 28(1), pp.45-55. doi:10.1016/j.soncn.2011.11.005
3. Hansen, C. (2012). PhD Candidate Dissertation: “*A Pilot Study on Bowenwork for Symptom Management of Women Breast Cancer Survivors with Lymphedema,*” University of Arizona, USA. Retrieved on February 22, 2014 at: <http://www.nursing.arizona.edu/Library/Christine%20Hansen%20-%20Dissertation%20March%202012.pdf>

An overview of Sandra Gustafson’s continuing education course:
Bowenwork for People Living With Cancer.

In this one-day course, we explore the nature and types of cancer, causes and risk factors, and medical treatment options. Using evidence-based research and real-life case-study reports, we dispel the myth that Bowenwork may be contraindicated for people living with cancer (PLWC).

We consider how Bowenwork can help people cope with receiving their diagnosis, treatment and side-effects, and support them in remission or palliative care.

We discuss how Bowenwork practitioners can position themselves to be effective advocates for PLWC clients as they navigate cancer treatment-milieu, seek recovery and restoring optimal quality of life.

We also explore the art and science of compassionate touch, and creating safe, effective Bowenwork sessions for PLWC and care-givers, and how Bowenwork practitioners need to adapt their approaches to accommodate clients undergoing treatment, or have medical implants, bone metastasis, compromised vital organ function, or lymphoedema. Practitioners need to be more aware of client positioning techniques and take extra precautions to provide maximum comfort, pain relief, sleep support, and prevent aggravation of symptoms.

Finally, Bowenwork practitioners are encouraged to embrace healthy lifestyle choices for their own wellbeing, and act as positive resources in promoting cancer prevention and health screening for early detection.