

My Journey with Integrative Medicine

“Being bald is just another hairstyle”

Helen Christake

Helen Christake has been coming to The Center for Integrative Medicine (TCFIM) for over 5 years and has agreed to share her overall experience; in particular the physical and emotional impact that complementary and alternative medicine has had on her in general and with the cancer she battled.

“My last few years have been a roller coaster ride of physical issues and emotions and fears and thoughts that rise up like waves at high tide and hit me in the face. If one woman has some little nagging thought or develops a sense that maybe, just maybe I should be checked, I will be happy.”

Read on to hear Helen’s story on how integrative medicine has made a difference in her life. From Dr. Ban Wong, Dr. Brian Enebo and Ann Mathews helping with pain management and various symptoms of cancer treatments to Dr. Denise McGuire keeping her focused on maintaining a normal routine to Tina Gillett at the front reminding her that all is well in the world. As Helen put it in a nutshell, “TCFIM brings me back to me.”



Helen’s Story

I was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer Stage 2C in February of 2007. My surgery was in March done at another facility. I ultimately chose or you chose me, I’m never sure how those things happen. During my adventures in chemo land and I do have to call it that, how else do you describe being bald, constipated and suffering from neuropathy? And oh yes, I forgot Chemo brain. I received 6 treatments. After the first treatment I developed neuropathy. Unsure what I was to do about this, my oncologist suggested acupuncture. And so I found The Center for Integrative Medicine. My first ventures were with acupuncture, and I also did many massages and chiropractic treatments to lessen the effects of the chemo. Acupuncture treatments and herbs helped with the neuropathy; herbs and massage therapy helped with constipation; and chiropractic care helped with pain and unfreezing my muscles and joints. My final chemo was at the end of July 2007.

During the same timeframe when I was being treated for ovarian cancer, my sister Mary was being treated for the same diagnosis at a different treatment center and I helped care for her shortly after I was done with my own treatments. Mary passed in November 2007. That winter I continued working and rebuilding my life following my

sister's death. My hair grew back and although I felt disconnected from myself, I continued on in my life. In May 2008, my beloved dog passed away and emotionally I collapsed. My panic call led me to Dr. Denise McGuire who has been my rock and my confidant since. She has carried me and led me through all the goods and bads of this journey.

Over the past 5 years, I have maintained a connection with The Center for Integrative Medicine for acupuncture, massage, chiropractic and nutritional care. Because I know I have a family history of cancer (my father and all of his siblings passed from various cancers), I have explored all avenues to help me.

In 2012 I had a reoccurrence at my 5 year anniversary date. I had debulking surgery in February and was hospitalized for 7 days. Following that I was plagued with constipation and a stomach that would not function. As I was contemplating my fate one morning it hit me that Dr. Ban Wang would have a remedy, and he did. I was given an immediate appointment and have used Chinese medicine – acupuncture and herbs, to make my stomach work. I also followed up that treatment with massage and chiropractic treatment.

I started chemo again and once again used acupuncture for the neuropathy in my hands and feet. The stomach issues continued and the use of the Chinese medicine helped where the standard Miralax or any other products did not. Because the acupuncture and herbs I was given helped the functionality of my stomach, this was my turnover point where I knew I was going to live through this.

Cancer is a land without a map. And the Center is my Navigational Center. I receive treatments, emotional strength and understanding, respect and care from all who work there. And I know that through the Center, I am doing for myself all that I can do to relieve the fear that walks with me. I know that no matter what happens I can turn to the Center for that place called home. When all is said and done, many rational decisions for healthcare come through the Center.

I've learned I passionately care that no one should go through this and speaking out loudly and often may help someone. My Advice.... hmmm drink lots of water or have popsicles when water gets boring, maintain a normal routine in your life, and keep your brain active by trying something new. Accept what is happening and try to move beyond it. Reach out for help. You cannot travel this road by yourself.



Additional Resources

Read more on ways Integrative Medicine can help with cancer treatment side effects and why 80% of cancer patients use at least one complementary and alternative modality by [clicking here](#).

(Article can also be found by following this link: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nalini-chilkov/cancer-complimentary-medicine- b 838191.html>)