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Palliative Support With Complementary Approaches

Giving Well-being, Trust and Security

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People in palliative care usually want to be able to spend their remaining time in the highest possible well-being and to experience support for body, mind and spirit in this way. Although the possibilities for patients in this phase have developed significantly in recent decades, there are still many reservations – also among therapists, naturopaths and the personal environment. With this article, I would like to advocate involving more naturopaths in palliative support and care, as they can be a valuable pillar of support for those affected and their relatives with the help of naturopathy and complementary procedures.

Palliative Medicine and Care

Palliation refers to a medical treatment that does not aim to cure the disease, but to alleviate the symptoms associated with it. The term comes from the Latin word *pallium*, which means "mantle". Palliative care and measures are aimed at people with incurable diseases in an advanced phase. A cure is no longer possible. Therefore, the interventions aim to maintain well-being and quality of life – through regular monitoring of the course and symptoms as well as through nursing, psychosocial and, if necessary, spiritual care of those affected and their environment.

Palliative care can be provided at home, in clinics or hospices, depending on the condition. Due to the challenging situation and the wide range of starting points, a team from different disciplines is usually active in order to provide adequate care for palliative patients. This phase can range from days to weeks, months and years. 90% of the causes are malignant tumor diseases, but also MS, ALS, severe kidney, lung or cardiovascular diseases. Currently, the need for appropriate services is higher than the available resources.

Higher-level considerations

Before we deal with some supportive measures for people in palliative care, I would like to address some basic aspects. In my opinion, everyone who works with those affected or their relatives should deal with this. So let me pick out a few overarching points:

Ethics

A humane and ethically appropriate approach to the situation should be the basis of any medical, therapeutic or complementary steps. Promises of healing or guarantee should not be made or hopes stirred up if this is neither appropriate nor can be guaranteed. For a cooperation with alternative practitioners, the exact performance mandate must be clarified so that patients know where they stand right from the start.

Strengthen Self-Efficacy

The overall condition of patients in palliative care can vary greatly. Accordingly, considerations regarding strengthening self-efficacy must always be adapted to the situation. At the same time, those affected can gain *joie de vivre* when they feel that nurses, therapy staff and we as alternative practitioners trust them to do something and carry out exercises and procedures with them that they can later use independently. In this way, the ability to act can be increased in challenging moments, which gives courage and confidence.

At Eye Level

Be it in communication or in dealing with each other – patients in this phase want to be treated equally and not like people who can no longer be helped. When working with palliative patients, let yourself be guided by mindfulness, always with the consideration of not patronizing them. It should therefore always be possible to address wishes and concerns openly. Even if the patients decide not to want to continue working with us as naturopaths, it is important to accept this.

Needs Orientation

Out of thoughtfulness and helpfulness, we may want to decrease certain patients activities so as not to overload them. But this is not always desired or necessary. For this reason, there should be close coordination with regard to current needs: Are home visits requested, do the affected people come to your practice or are you allowed to visit them in the hospital? According to the condition, the respective applications should also be carried out and, if necessary, ended earlier.

Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity seems to me to be even more central here than with other patients. Each discipline has its own perspective on the symptoms and on the effects of different interventions. Close coordination with each other should take place regularly, although not every application can be replicated by all disciplines. Even if the basic goal is to maintain well-being for as long as possible, the interaction of different therapists, physicians and naturopaths should serve to strengthen and stabilize it.

Integration of The Environment

Relatives, friends and acquaintances are also in an exceptional situation. This should always be taken into account. Therefore, it can be good for those around them to be involved in certain application steps, to participate in some exercises or to talk to us as naturopaths afterwards – not about the patient, but rather about their own fears, thoughts and considerations. But relatives are also indispensable in terms of optimal support in everyday life or as a motivational aid in challenging phases. Therefore, you should ensure their awareness and explain the practical approaches for working together.

Well-being Through The Power of Nature

Especially when it comes to palliative support, various approaches from naturopathy can bring balance, calmness, stability and gentle strengthening. A medical consultation is advised in order not to overlook any interactions or antagonistic effects with medication. Normally, however, naturopathic remedies do not get in the way of conventional medicine. Below are some options.

Bach Flowers

These gentle companions can become real comforters, especially for people in palliative care. The 38 essences correspond to different states of mind. When choosing the optimal flowers, a nice exchange with the other person can be created by extracting 3-6 essence bottles. Afterwards, their meaning is discussed together. For application, I recommend the so-called medicine vial method: A few drops of each flower are mixed in 10 ml of water or 5% alcohol. Of these, 4 x 4 drops are taken daily - in liquid or given with a meal. Alternatively, the daily dose can also be added to bath water or cosmetics. In principle, all flowers are suitable for palliative support. However, I would like to highlight the following flowers and mixtures in particular:

- Emergency drops (consisting of Numbers 6, 9, 18, 26 and 29)
- Beech “Tolerance Flower” (No. 03)
- Cherry Plum “Serenity Flower” (No. 06)
- Gorse “Hope Flower” (No. 13)
- Hornbeam “Tension Flower” (No. 17)
- Mustard “Light Flower” (No. 21) [*Light, joy, emotional clarity*]
- Willow “Destiny Flower” (No. 38) [*Rebirth of optimism and faith*]

Fragrance as a bridge to the soul: Essential oils such as lavender can provide peace, balance and emotional security in palliative care.

Essential Oils

Our sense of smell can create a quick and profound connection to our emotional center, the limbic system. Essential oils can be valuable tools on this path. Mixed with a high-quality carrier oil (e.g. coconut, almond or jojoba oil), gentle massages can be performed or patients can be guided to self-massages. Diffusers in the rooms can serve to positively influence the atmosphere and the current emotional state.

- Roman chamomile, lavender or lemon balm can provide peace and balance, especially in the evening or in tense situations.
- Peppermint, orange or lemon refresh and bring new energy.
- Resinous oils such as blue or black spruce, cedar or sandalwood provide grounding and stability.

Gemmotherapy

The use of alcoholic bud extracts is becoming increasingly relevant in naturopathy, which is why I also see them here as a powerful support for more well-being, inner peace and stability. You can find some selected representatives here:

- **Blackcurrant (*Ribes nigrum*):** This is considered a jack-of-all-trades in gemmotherapy because it can also be used in "emergencies". In addition to the immune system, it supports the adrenal cortex in stimulating steroid hormones. For example, cortisone-like effects can be found in acute inflammation. It can always be used as a supplement if conventional medicine prescribes cortisone.
- **Black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*):** This has a cooling effect on inflammation with pus or mucus. Its anti-inflammatory effect on the mucous membranes of the respiratory tract and ears is outstanding in bronchitis, pneumonia and sinus and ear inflammations. Black alder should also be considered for viral infections such as flu, German measles or herpes. **Caveat:** The restrictions applicable to alternative practitioners according to the Infection Protection Act must be observed here!
- **Giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*):** Because of its revitalizing effect on symptoms of exhaustion such as fatigue, overload and depressive moods, the sequoia is a good remedy for holistic strengthening. It balances the nervous system in situations where everything becomes too much and even minor stimuli overload.

Mental Peace

People who are in palliative care experience an emotional roller coaster ride, characterized by fears, uncertainty, hope and the desire for a "normal everyday life". That's why I see it as so important to offer support on the mental level and, in addition to psychologists, to bring more calm into the overall system in a gentle way.

Relaxation methods

These can be a very valuable resource if people are very nervous and restless in this phase of life, if moments of discomfort or pain occur and if it is difficult to deal with the overall situation. Here, as naturopaths, we can offer relaxation training and strengthen the patients to a certain extent in their self-efficacy. Depending on their condition, they can be encouraged to actively participate. It is also possible, for example, to let imaginary journeys or autogenic training work on them like a "bedtime story". Here you can certainly be brave and try different things – depending on which relaxation methods are good for the patients at the time. Above all, they should be simple and easy to use. A joint practice of breathing techniques, muscle relaxation, tapping or body exercises, gentle meditations, instruction for Qigong or chair yoga can help to find inner peace.

Embodiment

This concept makes the strong interaction between body and mind clear and why it is so important to gently stimulate one level over the other. Exercises to activate the vagus nerve can strengthen body awareness and shift the focus from thoughts to feeling. Simple techniques are intended to help those affected overcome hurdles, self-rejection and frustration in order to appreciate and lovingly motivate the body even in weak phases. They can guide patients to gentle self-massages, e.g. with essential oils, show them the beneficial effects of fascia rollers or body tapping. All this creates trust, makes boundaries disappear and taboos fall silent.

Conversations

Depending on whether patients in palliative care want to exchange ideas and receive therapeutic discussions, I see honest conversations – including small talk – as enriching. Let people talk about their lives and listen to their wishes, worries and hopes. You can work with mindful questions here: "How can I do something good for you now? Would you like to tell me about an experience that has remained in your memory to this day?" The conversations do not have to go in the direction of pastoral care. Perhaps people want an exchange about everyday life, various processes in the region or reinforcement in what they can still do themselves.

Energetic Support

Energy procedures can be an anchor for people in palliative care, which can bring them back to a familiar body feeling for a short time, give them inner peace and relieve excessive tension. If conventional medicine only offers applications or medications to relieve pain or maintain well-

being, the following procedures can promote trust, create balance and reduce blockages that make everyday life even more difficult.

Acupressure

Pressure point massage can bring relief to palliative patients in cases of physical and spiritual discomfort and provide them with the simple instrument of their hand for purposes of self-efficacy. There are various techniques in acupressure such as pushing, dividing, pressing, kneading, moving and pinching. The point conception vessel 17 (Co-17) (which is located in the middle of the sternum) can provide valuable services by being tapped regularly, and can be used for dizziness, weak immune system, sadness, psychosomatic pain and nervousness. On the other hand, spleen-pancreas 2 (Sp-2) can be pressed up to 15 times at the metatarsophalangeal joint of the big toe for stomach complaints, nausea, low mood and lack of drive. The triple burner 22 (TB-22) is located in front of the upper auricle base and can be pressed lightly 20 times. This point can be used for mental exhaustion, tiredness, fears and feelings of helplessness.

Bioresonance

Depending on the device, bioresonance in the background can be a powerful energetic support to designate challenges of people in palliative care that are not visible at first glance. The aim is to energetically harmonize subtle burdens on the body, negative influences on the subconscious – such as obstructive emotions, destructive beliefs, traumatic experiences or other challenging unconscious issues – as well as toxins or drug interactions. Energy levels such as the aura, the chakras, the meridians or the morphogenetic field can also find relief through a bioresonance application. Regular "cleansing" in this way can give patients a better quality of life. However, it is important to distinguish between medical diagnostics and false promises.

Colored Light Applications

The use of colors in everyday life can not only help those affected to better express their mood, but also to positively influence the atmosphere of the living area. Warm colors such as yellow, red, orange or brown tones can bring motivation, grounding, energy, joy and joie de vivre. Green can have a balancing effect, while blue and violet are perceived as calming and relaxing. The combination of color and light is very interesting in this context: In this way, the skin and the sensory channels can absorb the color frequency in a more differentiated way.

Many diffusers also have a color scheme so that color and fragrance can be linked. However, colored light bulbs or various objects with an LED function (e.g. sphere) can also emit different shades of color and put patients in a different mood. Small hand-held light bulbs (similar to a flashlight) can be very pleasant for the skin and when irradiating larger parts of the body.

Working With Precious (Gem) Stones

Modern stone healing is not only based on the appearance and the subjective energetic perception of a gemstone. Aspects such as the formation processes, the meaning of the colors, the crystal structure as well as the minerals contained are considered to be causal for the spectrum of action of a stone. Foot reflexology massages with gemstones, the application of fascia gemstone rollers

or the application of stones to certain parts of the body are intended to serve as wellness procedures and allow patients to feel the special features of different gemstones. Picking up a personal stone, placing it yourself or putting it under the pillow at night can convey security and support. Depending on whether the patient is at home, in a hospital or hospice, it can be considered to place larger gemstones in the room to loosen up and positively influence the atmosphere. A gemstone water can also support palliative patients.

Bodywork

Energy procedures such as Reiki, Holistic Pulsing, Craniosacral Therapy or Japanese healing currents enable not only deep relaxation but also feelings of safety and security. The nervous system is allowed to come to rest, thoughts recede into the background and inner tensions can be released more easily. This type of work in particular is very patient-centered: The patients are self-empowered and involved in the process and are allowed to share their perceptions at any time or simply enjoy a different contact grip. Energy methods do not impose anything on the patient, rather they are simply allowed to be in the present moment – free of diagnoses and prognoses. An unbiased encounter on an energetic level can strengthen basic trust, make you forget pain for a moment and promote well-being. Some of these procedures also offer handles for self-application, which can be shown and the patients can do it themselves.

Conclusion

Palliative treatment measures are intended to maintain as much quality of life as possible for terminally ill people and make everyday life easier for them. With naturopathic methods such as Bach flower remedies, gemmo preparations or essential oils, with mental techniques and energetic procedures such as bioresonance, gemstone applications, coloured lights and bodywork, naturopaths have many helpful tools at their disposal that can make this challenging phase of life more bearable for those affected and their relatives. I am convinced that approaches from naturopathic practice contribute a lot to the well-being of patients and can thus enable a dignified end of life.

Keywords: Essential oils, Bach flowers, gemmotherapy, complementary oncology, palliative care

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