

# RED FLAGS AND FREE SPEECH

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People do sometimes tell lies to make a profit, and will argue “Free Speech.”

However, shouting “*fire*” in a theatre is not free speech; it is, in fact, a criminal act, and the panic it creates has caused death and serious injury.

Similarly, promoting or selling unproven cures for cancer is dangerous, even when the intent is pure. And when such belief delays the use of genuinely effective treatment, it can contribute to untimely or unnecessary death.

For interventions that treat cancer:

- What's **possible**? Anything ... but not everything is equally possible.
- Of what is **plausible**, how much will prove useful? A handful.
- What's **proven effective** for a given condition will be determined by rigorous study and independent review of scientifically plausible therapeutic agents.

## While anything's possible

The odds that a folk remedy or natural approach will reverse a cancer are **possible**, but remote. Else, prior to scientific method good remedies for

cancer would have been discovered by trial and error and passed down with oral tradition.

Cancer cells have defects that give the cells growth and survival advantages over normal cells. Thus, for example, food-based remedies, and cleansing strategies are not plausible approaches to these conditions – the abnormal cells will do as well as normal cells when provided organic nutrients.

## The plausible:

History tells us that the majority of **plausible** approaches to cancer will be proven unhelpful. By plausible we mean agents or interventions that trained scientists have discovered that induce cancer cells to die (have activity) in animals or cell cultures – or that is based on insights about mechanisms of the disease.

## The implausible:

Here are some **red flags** that can alert you that a web site or unknown person is trying to sell an implausible and unproven cancer treatment (or book):

- The treatment is for **ALL** cancers
- The treatment is said to **CURE** cancer (as if it was one disease).
- The treatment has **no side effects**.
- The words **secret** or **conspiracy** is used to explain why the product is not mainstream.<sup>1</sup>

- Online purchasing of the cancer product is permitted - it does not require a doctor's prescription.
- The promotion relies on **patient testimonials**.
- There is **no independent review** from FDA, or a similar independent regulatory agency
- The clinical data is **not published in respected scientific journals** (no peer review).
- There is **only one group** promoting the product or service.

<sup>1</sup> Asserting that **secret** cures are hidden from the public because of a **conspiracy** is just not credible. As an advisor pointed out: “*Scientists, regulators, politicians, and their loved ones get cancer.*” Are we to believe that professionals around the globe are involved in a conspiracy? And would not the diagnosis of cancer in the child of a “conspirator” not compel many parents to relent and to go public?

## Natural vs. Synthetic?

Promising agents are such whether they are extracted from nature or are synthesized in a lab from scratch, or by modifications of natural molecules. That they are active or not, natural or not, is the question. In the end it's the affinity of the compound to the disease process that counts. Does the compound get to and bind to the abnormal cellular protein; does it cause the cancer cell to stop dividing or die? What's the effective dose? Is the effective dose safe? Does the net effect lead to meaningful clinical benefit?.

## About Cause and Effect (Causal vs. Coincidence)

It's human nature to look for connections between one event and another, but many times chance, or unknown or unrecognized factors could also explain the "effect."

Patients with indolent lymphomas may be particularly susceptible to confusing cause and effect, because the natural course of the disease is variable.

- For example, indolent lymphomas can remain stable for many years without intervention, or regress spontaneously: "as many as 20% to 30% of patients will experience regressions at some time in the clinical course of their disease."

Therefore, if a practitioner prescribes a life style or alternative protocol that 100 patients follow, as many as 30% are likely to do well because they would have done well anyway.

- This "effect," - which has good probability of being unrelated to the practice - will often result in strong belief and promotions, as in: "*How can you argue with my success?*"

*"I tried xyz herb (A) and my lymph nodes decreased (B) since my last scan."*

*"Quackery and fakery give a major black eye to complimentary practices that may legitimately be of help." ~ Denise*

In summary, we want to help patients and caregivers to recognize:

■ The red flags that identify promotions of unproven cancer treatments, such as:

the significant limitations of testimonials, particularly when it is the only evidence provided.

that the conspiracy theory to keep cures from patients is just not plausible.

■ That cancer is not one disease, but many (more than one hundred), and that the standard of care, and natural course of each vary considerably.

Additional Reading:

***How to Evaluate Medical Claims and Data*** see [www.lymphomation.org/CAM-evaluating.htm](http://www.lymphomation.org/CAM-evaluating.htm)

***When Lay Persons Give Medical Advice***

[www.lymphomation.org/CAM-layadvice.htm](http://www.lymphomation.org/CAM-layadvice.htm)

***Big Pharma Conspiracy Theory?***

[www.lymphomation.org/BigPharma.htm](http://www.lymphomation.org/BigPharma.htm)

***The Problems with Testimonials***

[www.lymphomation.org/Testimonials.pdf](http://www.lymphomation.org/Testimonials.pdf)

# PATIENTS AGAINST LYMPHOMA

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~ Education ~ Support ~ Advocacy ~

*Providing evidence-based  
resources on lymphoma  
and its treatments  
independent of health  
industry funding*

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PAL is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization

**Lymphomation.org**

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