

About Dr Dorjee Rapten Neshar



It may not be far-fetched to say that Dr Dorjee has a larger following of cancer patients in this part of the country than any other medical practitioner. Chief Medical Officer at Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute of His Holiness the Dalai Lama) in Bangalore, Dr Dorjee is also the former chairman of the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine, Dharamshala. An alumnus of the Tibetan medical College in Dharamshala, he is trained in medico-spiritual initiations for the more esoteric practice of Tibetan medicine as well. In recognition of his outstanding contribution in the field of Alternative Medicine, Dr Dorjee was awarded the Gold Medal & Gem of Alternative Medicine in 1995 and 1996 from the Indian Board of Alternative Medicine, Calcutta. He also received the International Award of Excellence, from the American Organization of Intellectuals Inc, New York, USA.

A Cancer Thriver Wears A Journalist's Hat: Interview with Dr Dorjee Rapten Neshar

(By Gunjan Mohanka, June 26, 2011)

Gunjan Mohanka feels she got lucky. Most cancer patients come to the Men-Tsee-Khang (Tibetan Medical Centre) only after they have been declared terminal. Gunjan started taking their medication right from the time she was diagnosed with 3rd-stage breast cancer. She was familiar with the case of a family friend who lived for more than 10 years after he had been declared terminal. At first Gunjan took Tibetan medicine along with her Allopathic treatment. But because of overwhelming side-effects she now relies solely on Tibetan medicine. In this 2-part interview, she talks to Dr Dorjee in an effort to better understand this little-known system of holistic medicine.

What are the principles of disease and health, according to Tibetan Medicine?

Dr Dorjee: Disease has three interconnected aspects – spiritual, psychological and pathological.



- The highest aspect is the spiritual understanding of disease. Disease is suffering and therefore an understanding of suffering gives us insights into what causes disease and how we can face the challenge of disease. The root cause of suffering according to Buddhist philosophy, is Ignorance. We develop erroneous ideas of our existence. So we view life as a series of “not getting what we want” and “getting what we don’t want” experiences.
- This brings us to the more psychological aspect of disease. Because of our ignorance, we develop many negative mental afflictions such as desire, attachment, lust, hatred, anger, lassitude, delusion and more. All of these manifest into different physical and mental imbalances.
- Each emotion has its own area of influence in the body. To give you an example, desire and attachment impact the heart and thyroid, hatred and anger impact the liver and blood, lassitude and delusions impact the brain and kidney.
- Over a period of time, these negative emotions accumulate and in turn lead to pathological conditions and imbalances that manifest as disease.

Can you please explain the 3 Levels of disease?

Dr Dorjee: Tibetan Medicine understands the cause of disease at 3 levels: Ultimate, Proximate and Immediate.

- The Ultimate cause is one’s Karma. Our karma matures across lifetimes and gives rise to various idiopathic or intractable health disorders.

- As mentioned earlier, from the Ignorance-Desire-Anger negative mental states arise the Proximate cause of disease: The imbalance of Wind (*“rLung”*), Bile (*“mKris Pa”*) and Phlegm (*“Bad Kan”*).
- Then there are the Immediate causes: improper diet; irregular lifestyle; mental, seasonal and environmental factors.

And what about Cancer, specifically?

Dr Dorjee: The root cause is poor digestion, due to an improper diet and lifestyle. Good digestion keeps us in good health because it produces regenerative fluids in the body that give us radiance and shine. Improper diet and lifestyle alters the natural bio-chemical mechanism of the body system, prompting our bodies to produce unhealthy and abnormal cells.

Another factor that we don't understand fully is when we knowingly or unknowingly cause sacrilege of other beings, dwellings or places. In Tibetan medicine, it is said that we are then cursed by the spirits (*“Drel-thug”*). These unexplained factors too cause some kind of irreversible cancer cases.

How do you diagnose the exact problem?

Dr Dorjee: Interrogation, pulse examination and urine analysis. Between these three, we can learn what we need to know. It takes years of training and practice to become good at it!

What is the typical Tibetan Medicine treatment for Cancer?

Dr Dorjee: The real nature of cancer is mainly abnormal and impure blood which tends to get solidified into tumours. This is a result of stress and tension in the mind and body which in turn causes our wind energy system to malfunction. Our typical treatment is three-pronged:

1. Reduction of tumour size with heat treatment like moxibustion and **Golden hammer therapy**.
2. Cleansing and detoxification of the body with **purification therapies**.
3. Fortification of the body's immune system and restoration of the balance of the body's energy system with the help of effective herbal medicine, Precious pills, and the right food and lifestyle.

In your opinion, what works well and doesn't work as well?

Dr Dorjee: There are some important things to note. The patient should not lose hope of survival. No line of treatment works well when the patient loses the spirit to fight. I have found that patients who are frustrated and close – minded impede the healing process. On the other hand, those who are positive and upbeat often beat the odds. Patient participation with self healing techniques like meditation, yoga, chakra and other spiritual healing techniques also goes a long way.

Our medicine works best when there are no intervening medicines. Different types of medications taken in combination compound the problem in my view. What's most important is the right medicine in the right dosage at the right time. So, while we do give supporting medicines alongside chemotherapy to reduce the side-effects and to improve the immune

parameters, we do not recommend our cancer treatment in conjunction with chemotherapy, radiation or other alternative therapies.

We also try to understand individual body constitutions and accordingly recommend what food is needed and what is not. If there are deficiencies, we try to overcome them with various supplements.

To sum up, patients who understand and accept their disease, have a positive outlook, take medicines in time, employ diet, lifestyle and the right state of mind and do not mix different treatments effectively aid their own recovery.

Is your success rate better for some types of cancers than others?

Dr Dorjee: Our success rate is high with breast cancer, multiple myeloma (bone cancer), some forms of chronic blood cancers (chronic lymphoblastic leukaemia), lung cancer, ovarian cancer, colo-rectal cancer, thyroid cancer, and a few types of brain cancers too. Efficacy also depends on the stages and grades of the various cancers.

I have found it very difficult to control advanced stomach and liver cancer, Glioblastoma multiforme, acute blood cancer, cancer of the connective tissues, chondrosarcoma and some forms of highly progressive or galloping cancers.

Can you please share some case studies with us?

Dr Dorjee: We have 18 documented case studies but they are private / official and I am afraid I cannot share them publicly.

How does Tibetan Medicine work at different stages of the Cancer journey?

Dr Dorjee: As with all disease, the earlier the diagnosis and the sooner treatment begins, the greater the chance of success. However, our medicines can also be very effective in case of recurrence or for some secondary complications. In these situations, most often, a second line of treatment with stronger combinations is required.

Tibetan medicine is also very good in palliative care. It can often help to control and manage the disease without severe pain and trauma even in advanced and terminal cases. This is achieved not only through medicines but also through self-healing and visualisation techniques, pain management therapies, meridian massages with herbs, meditation and initiation into spiritual healing.

We also place a lot of emphasis on preparing the patients for their journey into the next life. As such, we encourage them to get rid of mental and emotional attachments, frustrations and all other negative feelings. It is our belief that it is very important for one's soul to leave this world in peace.

What dietary principles does Tibetan Medicine recommend for Cancer?

Dr Dorjee: In our system, diet is individualised. Five people can have the same cancer but the diet for each may be totally different. This is because we base a patient's diet on his or

her individual body constitution and the dominating influence of the energy system like wind, bile and phlegm energy. In Ayurveda, this is referred to as “Dosha” and we call it “Rang-shin”. For example, people with high “pitta” are recommended a diet that reduces “pitta”, those with stronger vatta or wind energy need smoother and more soothing foods while others with khapa or Badkan are required to take a warm and soupy diet to pacify the energy system first.

Whatever one’s constitution, the aim of choosing a diet with the right proportion of taste and potency is to build the right ‘cosmo-physical’ energies in the body and to achieve a dynamic equilibrium or homeostasis. This, according to our science, is what builds perfect health. In general, dark green leafy and fibrous vegetables, plenty of fruits such as papaya, apple, cherries and berries, pomegranate, lime and foods rich in beta carotene and active flavinoids are good for the system. Fish, especially river and clear-water fish are beneficial as they have Omega-3 fatty acids.