

Safety concerns linked to herbal medicine use in cancer

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(HealthDay)—For patients with cancer, use of herbal medicine has associated safety-related concerns, including direct toxic effects and increased chemosensitivity of cancer cells, according to a study published online Nov. 24 in *Cancer*.

Eran Ben-Arye, M.D., from the Lin Medical Center in Haifa, Israel, and colleagues examined the use of [herbal medicine](#) by Middle Eastern patients with [cancer](#), using a 17-item questionnaire that was administered by oncology health care professionals (HCPs). The literature was reviewed to assess potential negative effects associated with [herbal products](#) identified by the study HCPs.

The researchers found that 44 herbal and three non-herbal nutritional supplements were identified by 339 HCPs who completed the study

questionnaire (response rate, 80.3 percent). Twenty-nine products had associated safety-related concerns, including herb-drug interactions with altered pharmacodynamics, direct toxic effects, and increased in vitro response of [cancer cells](#) to chemotherapy (15, 18, and seven herbs, respectively).

"Oncology HCPs working in countries in which herbal medicine use is prevalent need to better understand the implications of this practice," the authors write. "The presence of integrative physicians with training in complementary and traditional medicine can help patients and their HCPs reach an informed decision regarding the safety and effective use of these products."

More information: [Abstract](#)
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