

Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I'm Judy Simpson today we continue our occasional series of programs on your health and cancer in partnership with University of Vermont Cancer Center are focused this afternoon is on integrative medicine and cancer care you're not alone if you're hearing the phrase integrative healthcare for the first time to find out more i'm joined by two guests dr. Amy Littlefield owns and operates Vermont wellness medicine and integrity oncology she is one of four oncology certified neuropathic physicians in New England her work in cancer care bridges the gap between conventional medicine care medical care rather and naturopathic medicine by working with patients and medical providers around the state along with dr. Littlefield is Kara Feldman hunt Carol manages UVM's integrative health care program her work involves collaborations in the academic study and clinical application of Integrative What is integrative medicine Medicine thank you both for coming in my first question Kara is what is integrative health care so it's the combination of conventional medicine and alternative medicine it's really the best of both worlds it really the approach is to have a relationship between the practitioner and the patient um it uses the least invasive approaches first when possible um it's really about health promotion rather than disease management and anything else that you would add that I've missed is that coverage yeah and so what's the difference between integrative healthcare and alternative medicine so it's a really important question because there are lots of ways to support your health and sometimes people think of alternative medicine as something they might choose instead of the standard of conventional oncology that's a really important distinction that I like to make because an alternative suggests that there's an equivalent option and in oncology care there really isn't an equivalent option that will give you the same benefits that you could get from standard of care conventional oncology so what I advocate for in my practice is to combine the best of both worlds take what we know from that's very useful in the complementary therapies and combine it with conventional standard of care in a way to improve outcomes and quality of life that sounds pretty unique it's a growing field it's absolutely a growing field but it's getting much more common because patients are asking for it doctors realize the value and and so there are there a group of us in the area who are really promoting this access because it allows patients to stay involved in their care and so that would mean that probably every patient is clearly different in far as what their needs are yes absolutely so when I work with a patient I will get to know what very much about their conventional care I'll get to know their current treatment their past history and their side effects of treatment and what their medical personal medical goals are and then the really important thing that I do as part of my practice is make sure that we take out any treatments or therapies they've chosen that are not compatible with their current conventional care and there are dangerous treatments out there so we guide them and we help them and then from there we build and we say what can we do to help your sleep be better so that your overall outcomes are better how can we help optimize exercise how can we optimize your nutritional choices then some patients want to do even more and then I help guide them through the safe choices in terms of supplements or additional proactive therapies that they might choose to do keeping in mind always what conventional care are they getting are these two compatible or do we need to keep them apart and pursue an alternative that is safe and compatible and so do you have patients that are very much on board with this or other patients that are a little intimidated by this anyone who comes to see me is see me because they want to pursue a more broad integrative holistic type approach and they're coming to see me either because they want reassurance that they're doing it correctly or their physician has recommended that they get an opinion on how to do it safely but everyone who comes to see me is usually pretty proactive in their in their own care and is looking for medical guidance am I doing this correctly are these choices the right priorities for me and collaborating with the conventional team is really important on that as well and so when conventional treatment and and patients ask what's next is that something you can help with as well it's one of the most fulfilling parts of my practice because patients will go through this very emotionally mentally and physically demanding treatment receive the news that they are cancer-free let's say and also feel that they want to be really proactive and we absolutely know with the growing field of integrative medicine research that there are more things that are available to them if they choose and we can optimize and hit the targets for what the best application of exercise is in getting them stronger and rehabilitated physically we can absolutely hit the targets for can how much how many vegetables should you really eat and how much does that matter and patients come to me all the time feeling burdened by the rules and information they find online and really appreciating having some good integrative medical guidance on these questions that kind of bother them when they're looking to take a role in their own care because of course now with the internet there is so much information right on your fingertips

and it's really hard to kind of wade through all of that absolutely and so our conventional providers really appreciate or well informed on different options that are available that is growing certainly there are providers who know no more and some that are still learning i think you vm is doing a great job of working to make that accessible to their providers I know across the board that when a provider has good information and is open to communicating the providers conventional providers appreciate that there there certainly exists some alternative practitioners out there who who may not have medical training who look to advocate for something that's not well evidence-based and and so certainly the providers are going to have some concerns until they understand who your resources are and and what the training of that person is it sounds like it's an approach that's in demand care would you say yes absolutely I'm The demand for integrative medicine the NIH has put out some interesting statistics that 34 billion dollars a year is spent on complementary and alternative medicine really and yes and forty percent of us adults are using so the demand is real um I think that patients are seeking this for sure and how is integrative health program at UVM addressing that need and the growing evidence of the benefits mm-hmm so we have three arms of our program with a research arm clinical arm and and education arm we are partnering with the UVM Cancer Center and trying to develop some research around integrative health care for our clinical initiative we surveyed clinicians at the hospital and clinicians on what we found is they are most interested in acupuncture mindfulness yoga massage and biofeedback and what's great about that is those are all evident evidence-based modalities so we feel really comfortable rolling those modalities out so right now we're doing some pilots okay so let's talk a little bit about some of the specific types of complementary medicine and what are the benefits and possible risks there might be for cancer patients and survivors the biggest risk that I see in that in the incorporation of integrative therapies is is when the information is not shared collaboratively when a patient finds information and then doesn't doesn't share with his or her provider team the treatments that that they've chosen generally the therapies that are considered complementary therapies that are used in integrative medicine have a very high reward with a very low risk that being said anything we do has some degree of risk and that should be managed and monitored when we're thinking about mindfulness meditation gentle brisk walking those things have pretty low risk and we can encourage them across the board when we're looking to be more proactive and somebody wants to take a supplement then we need to think about the risk we need to think about the quality of the supplement we need to think about the potency of the supplement we need to think about whether that supplements compatible with the current conventional medicines prescriptions can you give you an example of what a supplement might be sure so some people will take herbs for example so a woman with a breast cancer diagnosis may take herbs set that she's read about and heard about and maybe used through her pregnancy and then may find that those herbs tasted good felt good they felt aligned with them but some of those herbs are also estrogenic and taking those with a breast cancer diagnosis now becomes very incompatible so supplements that somebody would think of as herbal tinctures vitamin d supplement is that is a pretty common and also potentially very valuable treatment and then there there are other high dose complex multiple formula products that certainly need some supervision because I think people think if they're taking it and the supplement that's verbal or organic that it's okay yes people do feel that way and and and very many times someone can do that safely but as soon as you have an oncology diagnosis complex medical situation I advocate for the more support the better the more people on your team helping you make that decision the better off you're going to Community practitioner forum be and just uh um so you vm is partnering with the community and we bring people like Amy in to our community practitioner forum so people can learn from each other because the information is constantly changing and so how affordable are these kinds of resources and are they covered by insurance many of them are nutrition services are very useful in an integrative medicine model mental health support mindfulness meditation these types of things are very very well covered as part of people's health plans naturopathic physicians are covered by Vermont health care plans oftentimes acupuncture is covered there are certainly therapies that that are useful that that are not covered but we're looking to support patients and many local hospitals have programs where support such as Reiki might be free and accessible to their patients even though they're not covered by insurance and if folks don't know what that is can you explain that is Ricky Ricky is an interesting type of considered and energy medicine where with without specifically having contact hand hand hand to body contact there will be there will be a supportive kind of healing space that that patients find a great benefit from very relaxing peaceful encouraging supportive care while they're receiving chemotherapy concurrently in some situations is this some it sounds like it's very

important for the patient to really play a very active role in their recovery maintenance being on the receiving end of a treatment is powerful being well cared for by your team but most patients come to the point where they actually want to be involved and they want to be directing some of their care and it helps them to feel a powerful healthy person and to be to be really Frank most patients with cancer are really really healthy people and we need to be taken care of the part of them that's really healthy while the oncology team is treating the cancer mm-hmm and you know we talked a little bit about this but what about after your treatment is over with and you go forward and maybe you're a five year survivor or 10 years survivors this information still just dis pertinent for some people they feel healthy they feel strong they're ready to go on and leave the cancer diagnosis behind them other people want long-term support and and supervision patients will be curious as I mentioned earlier people will think about diet or they'll hear diet and nutrition and the news often has new information that comes out and the patient will say I'm a five year survivor I think I'm doing great but do I need to know about this new information that I just heard about on the news they'll check in with me I'll help them discern what's valuable and what they can leave behind so that they can trust they're doing what's in their best interest moving forward so how can someone go about accessing these services um so there's a few different ways on you should always talk to your physician absolutely number one and try to get a referral we also you could go on to our website which is WVE be MDD you / medicine / PIH it's a great resource with a lot of information there's also a website Laura man center or as a directory of providers so those are all great resources which are listed on the UVM website and so you're both involved in an upcoming event hosted by the Vermont cancer survivor network keep telling a little bit about that sure so the event is on April second it's at the vermont college of fine arts in Montpelier it's free and it's open to the public and our participants will include cancer survivors family members and caregivers practitioners both conventional and complementary and alternative and the general public the goal is to introduce participants to the variety of Complementary and Integrative Medicine services available here in Vermont and how they integrate with traditional medicine and what the benefits and or risks maybe they'll be hands-on demos workshops lectures and an exhibits fair which will be more experiential will be an art exhibit featuring the work of participants from healing arts and writing a program facilitated by Patricia Fontaine for individuals and caregivers faced with illness and Amy will be our providing our keynote lecture focused on inspiring patients to pursue collaborative integrative care providers from the UVM Cancer Center UVM Health Network Central Vermont Medical Center along with community providers of various Complementary and Integrative Medicine practices will also be presenting we're very thankful to the Vermont cancer survivors network for working so hard to bring this program to survivors providers and the public once again that Saturday April second in Montpelier and if though you want more information there's a toll-free number it's 800 65 250 64 I want to thank you both for coming on today yeah that's our program for today i'm judy simpson will see you again next time on across the fence you you