Let’s incorporate herbal medicine into cancer treatment, says Onojobi

Dr. Gladys Onojobi is Assistant Professor, Hematology Oncology, Department of Medicine, Howard University, United States. She spoke to NATH OMAME, JR. on why herbal medicine should be incorporated into orthodox treatment for cancer.

Nigerian’s who can afford it are currently travelling to India for treatment. What story does the trend for the treatment of cancer specialists who are in the field and currently reside and practice abroad?

Even though some of us have been consulting for them, they still go to India for treatment. There is no way we can monitor the treatment they are getting in India, So, it is still in their interest in an environment they are used to.

I had four patients who couldn’t get visas to the United States, so they opted for treatment in India. Unfortunately, all of them died. My advice is that when people contract cancer, they should see doctors in the United States. If you can’t conduct consultations in their presence; explain the ailment to them and tell them what options are available in seeking for treatment.

Have you gone to Lagos University Teaching Hospital, (LUTH), to inquire what facilities they have?

I really don’t know what they have there. However, they need to be open to us in the provision of equipment and drugs for the treatment of cancer patients to encourage us to come back home, cancer treatment should be cheap and accessible.

If they want to undergo chemotherapy, we have a very good hospital in Taraba State, where the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), is an oncologist. They have the equipment to undertake all the necessary tests. I also understand that they liaise with the Ahmadu Bello University, (ABU), Zaria.

Why are cancer specialists like you still resident in the United States? Why don’t you come back to Nigeria, so that cancer patients can easily reach you for consultation and treatment?

That is true, but the government is not supporting us in terms of telling of what we can use. The government is not supporting us to get medication that we can give to patients. For now, most cancer patients fund their treatment without support from the government.

How many cancer centres have the government built? Even if there is any, we don’t know the quality that goes on there. We don’t have access to what they are doing there. Even the National Hospital in Abuja does not have the basic facilities to work with; or even the necessary medication for cancer patients. So, government needs to support us in the provision of equipment and drugs for the treatment of cancer patients to encourage us to come back home, cancer treatment should be cheap and accessible.

If you have made efforts in the provision of what facilities they have? I really don’t know what they have there. However, they need to be open to us on the basic equipment and treatment available there, so that we can liaise with them.

Do you have patients who are interested in herbal medicine?

I currently have patients who are interested in herbal medicine and have started taking it already. So, that is why I am attending Pax Herbal training for orthodox medical practitioners. I also attended the first edition. I think we really need to find out how we can incorporate herbal treatment for cancer patients into the orthodox protocol.

There is need for more research into available herbal treatment for cancer and see how orthodox and herbal medicine can be used in the treatment of cancer in our primary health care system as it is being done in China.

In your quest to get responsive and standardised herbal treatment incorporated into orthodox cancer treatment, have you made efforts towards the realization of this objective?

Yes, I am working closely with Pax Herbal and we are currently documenting protocols that we can use for the treatment of cancer patients. I have seen two patients who have gone through chemotherapy and were having lots of pain. By the time they came to Fr. Adodo, they had no other option but I can tell you that I confirmed that the pain seizure had subsided considerably.

I will keep in touch with Fr. Adodo to monitor the patients currently undergoing treatment at Pax Clinic in Ewu. I discovered that he plasters patients who have already undergone chemotherapy on fruit juice for about two weeks. I also confirmed from the patients that the severe pain they went through before they came to Pax Clinic in Ewu, reduced considerably after they were placed on fruit juice.

So, why don’t we incorporate what Fr. Adodo is doing into our orthodox cancer treatment? A recent report had indicated that if ginger is added to the chemotherapy agent, it decreases the effect of nausea and vomiting by at least 40 per cent, which is remarkable.

This means if you have 100 patients undergoing chemotherapy, 40 per cent of them will get better taking only ginger. And it is cheap and available. I think this option should be exploited.

I think it is time for Nigeria cancer specialists to come together and work as a team rather than competing. We need to categorize our patients, those who can afford cancer treatment abroad and those who can’t.

Our experts should give us the option of finding out what the actual position is before sending them abroad.

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