

Forward by Professor Ray Lowenthal AO

It is a pleasure to be invited to write the Foreword to Daniel Weber's book on integrative oncology. As a medical oncologist with over 30 years' experience, I am acutely aware that many of my cancer patients, perhaps most, are interested in what is now technically termed 'complementary and alternative medicine' (CAM). Studies of cancer patients in Australia show that at least half use CAM to some extent, mostly without confiding in their medical practitioners. They do not confide for various reasons, amongst them being fear of incurring their practitioner's opprobrium; a desire to use medicines in keeping with the patient's ethnic or cultural background which may differ from that of their oncologist; or a belief that CAM does not come under the purview of those with Western medical qualifications.

However the medical profession is coming to realise that it must take an interest in CAM, not least in relation to cancer treatment. We need to do so to understand what patients are taking, because – despite common claims – complementary and alternative medicines may not always be safe or harmless. Further, undoubtedly some forms of CAM, not currently accepted by the medical profession, will prove to be effective; the problem is that most CAM have not yet been tested according to scientific principles, so we do not know if they are beneficial or detrimental. That many of the prescription medications now in use for specific and supportive treatment of cancer patients are derived from 'natural' products indicates almost certainly that others are out there waiting to be discovered. Well-established examples include morphine and derivatives from the opium poppy and the anti-cancer agent vincristine from the Madagascan periwinkle. Many more discoveries will come from investigation of traditional medicines, especially those from time-honoured non-Western medical systems such as traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine.

In his exposition Mr. Weber first gives a comprehensive background to orthodox Western scientific understanding of cancer biology. He then describes in some detail the basic principles of certain traditional medical systems, concentrating on Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine. Studies of CAM in cancer treatment (the integration of such treatments with Western or orthodox medicine – 'integrative oncology') are then described. Both positive and negative reports are dispassionately catalogued. There follows a comprehensive annotated listing of CAM methods and medicinals from both 'Western' and Chinese practice – a veritable *catalogue raisonné*. Finally, the reference listing is wide-ranging and copious.

Mr. Weber is to be congratulated on the research that has led to the production of such a comprehensively documented *exposé*. If made widely available, the information within this work would be valuable to a range of health practitioners. In this one volume orthodox and CAM practitioners can learn about each others' approaches to cancer management. The annotated commentaries could allow oncologists like myself to give useful advice to their patients on possible benefits and dangers of various types of CAM.

I hope the work does indeed reach a wide audience and I applaud Mr. Weber on his achievement.