

Mistletoe FOR CANCER

Actress Suzanne Somers made headlines when she announced on Larry King Live that she was taking mistletoe extract (Iscador) to fight breast cancer, after undergoing lumpectomy and radiation therapy. At the same time, a controversy arose among American medical experts and others who questioned the scientific evidence behind her decision to use this alternative therapy.

Scientific evidence does exist for the effectiveness of using Iscador, however. Three German physicians conducted a study that found that breast cancer patients who augmented conventional treatment with Iscador survived longer than those who did not. Although Iscador is regarded as a complementary cancer therapy and is generally used in conjunction with—not instead of—conventional treatment, it is currently the most widely used cancer drug in Germany.

In addition to helping breast cancer patients, Iscador was also beneficial for patients who suffered from certain other types of cancer, including cancer of the colon, rectum, or stomach, and small cell or non-small-cell lung cancer. Overall, those

who took Iscador in addition to conventional treatment survived an average of 40% longer than those who received conventional treatment without Iscador.

The study followed 35,000 residents of Heidelberg, Germany, over 27 years, identifying more than 10,000 who had cancer. Nearly 800 of these cancer patients were sorted into pairs. One member of each pair took mistletoe extract in addition to conventional treatment; the other, who had a similar type and stage of disease, received only conventional treatment.

While breast cancer patients did better with Iscador treatment than without it, Iscador also increased survival rates for the other cancers examined in the study. In 69 matched pairs of patients with rectal cancer, the average increase in survival time for those who received Iscador was 54% compared with those who did not receive the mistletoe extract. Colon cancer subjects who were treated with Iscador had a 39% increase in survival time over those who were treated only with conventional treatment.

Iscador is a total extract of European mistletoe (*Viscum album*), which is generally administered by injection beneath the skin, sometimes intravenously, and sometimes near the tumor. It was first used for cancer

therapy in 1922 by Rudolf Steiner, founder of anthroposophical medicine, a medical system that includes the use of herbal and homeopathic medicines, among other modalities.

This study's findings confirm those of earlier clinical trials of mistletoe therapy. In most of those earlier studies, the survival time of patients who received mistletoe extract was superior to those who did not receive it. The use of mistletoe as a complementary therapy is indicated for cancers with solid tumors, such as those of the breast, colon, rectum, or lung, but not for leukemia or lymphoma. Further studies are needed to tell us more about the effectiveness of mistletoe extract for people with cancer.

For more information about Iscador, [\[redacted\]](#) on the Internet or call [\[redacted\]](#)

See more recent info.

The information in this article was originally published in the May 2001 issue of *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine* as "Use of Iscador, an Extract of European Mistletoe (*Viscum album*), in Cancer Treatment" by Ronald Grossarth-Maticzek, Prof Dr med, and colleagues.

Soy Supplement May Act Against Cancer

Isoflavones, such as genistein, are natural substances found in soybeans and are thought to have anticancer properties. Researchers recently tested GCP, a dietary supplement made from a fermented soy extract, to see if it, too, has anticancer properties. Natural isoflavones are poorly absorbed by the body, but it is possible that fermentation might improve the body's ability to absorb them.

Both GCP and genistein blocked the growth of prostate cancer cells in mice, compared with mice that were untreated. And the antitumor effects of GCP were greater than those of genistein, suggesting that the fermentation may increase the isoflavones' effectiveness.

From a study conducted by: Cao YC, Dorai T, Ghafar MA, Buttyan R, Katz AE : Genistein concentrated polysaccharide (GCP), a nutritional supplement with potent antiprostata cancer activity, Columbia University, Department of Urology, New York, New York.