

Viewpoint: Alternative medicine strikes again—and why cancer treatment should be left to professionals

Every doctor who treats cancer patients can tell you stories of patients who present with cancers too advanced to treat because they were spending their time pursuing alternative treatments. This has also been studied – last year a Yale team published a study [showing higher rates of death](#) among cancer patients who choose alternative treatments. There is now a recent story of a YouTuber who produced videos claiming that a vegan diet and prayer cured her stage 4 cancer, [except now she has died from her cancer](#).

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[W]e can't miss the lessons in this story. It is so typical it can serve as an archetype.

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[N]ewly diagnosed cancer patients can find countless stories of people claiming to have been “cured” of their cancer by all sorts of nonsense. There will always be a cohort of people in the honeymoon phase of their illness. This is the pitfall of anecdotal evidence. It is selective and biased.

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Failures are always blamed on the patient. It is a convenient rationalization – they lacked sufficient faith in the case of the former, and they did not adhere fanatically enough to the regimen, for the latter.

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[M]ainstream treatments are based on a thoughtful analysis of the best evidence available, and patients are given detailed informed consent. Alternative treatments are a package of lies, pseudoscience, false hope, and deception. But they are wrapped in a compelling narrative.

Editor's note: Steven Novella, MD, is an academic clinical neurologist at the Yale University School of Medicine

Read full, original post: [More Victims of Alternative Cancer Treatments](#)