

Homeopathy in Integrative Oncology: Toward Sustainable Health and Environmentally Friendly Practices

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Abstract:

Context: Nearly 40% of cancers could be prevented through effective primary prevention (healthy diet, physical activity, stress management, avoidance of tobacco and alcohol). Furthermore, about 70% of malignant tumors can be linked to environmental factors, particularly in breast cancers. This data aligns with the *One Health* approach, linking human, animal and environmental health.

Discussion: Integrative oncology combines conventional cancer treatments with validated complementary therapies, aiming to improve quality of life, reduce side effects and enhance treatment compliance. In Europe, homeopathy plays a central role within this framework. Randomized and observational studies (Frass 2015, 2020) have shown significant benefits in terms of quality of life, decreased medication use and even survival rates, with no major adverse effects or drug interactions reported.

Homeopathy is also an environmentally friendly therapy. *Arnica montana*, the most frequently prescribed homeopathic medicine, illustrates the link between clinical efficacy and ecological sustainability, both through positive randomized trials and responsible harvesting practices. In theory, a single flower could provide enough *Arnica montana* 30CH for the entire world.

The positive impact also extends to healthcare systems (less iatrogenesis, reduced costs), to society (better reintegration and psychological support) and to healthcare professionals (burnout prevention, renewed sense of what care entails).

Conclusion: Within integrative oncology, homeopathy addresses a triple challenge: medical, environmental and societal. It promotes sustainable health that goes beyond medical cure to encompass quality of life, prevention of sequelae and preservation of ecosystems. International clinical experience, randomized trials and positive patient feedback support its growing institutional recognition. Homeopathy thus emerges as one of the promising pathways towards a more human, ecological and responsible medicine.

Key words: Arnica montana, Homeopathy, Integrative oncology, One Health, Prevention

Introduction

With the increase in life expectancy and the ageing of the baby-boom generation, the prevalence of cancer is automatically expected to rise. By 2050, one in three French citizens will be over 60 years old. Cellular ageing, accumulated somatic mutations, epigenetic alterations, and immunosenescence can all promote the onset of cancer. This demographic challenge requires adapting our strategies for prevention, screening and cancer management. However, ageing is not the only factor. It is estimated that 40% of cancers could be prevented through primary prevention [1], namely by virtuous changes in lifestyle and behaviors: a healthy nutrition adopting a predominantly whole-food, plant-based diet; a regular and adapted physical activity; an effective stress management; positive social and emotional connections, a restorative sleep, safe sun exposure and avoidance of risky substances: tobacco, alcohol and drugs as recommended by lifestyle medicine [2].

In 2017, a literature review estimated that nearly 70% of malignant tumors could be attributed to environmental factors, with this proportion potentially rising to 90–95% in breast cancer [3]. This reality aligns closely with the One Health approach, where human, animal, and environmental health are inseparable [4].

While therapeutic advances in oncology regularly improve survival rates, long-term sequelae remain common. The French VICAN 5 study, carried out among 12,000 patients, showed that five years after diagnosis, more than 50% of patients still suffered from chronic fatigue, pain, cognitive disorders or anxiety [5]. This data highlights that medical cure alone is not sufficient: comprehensive and sustainable support is required as part of high-quality tertiary prevention. Sustainable health in oncology means broadening our perspective: moving from the disease to the patient, then from the patient to their environment. Cancer prevention is not limited to individual factors but also involves reducing collective environmental exposures. Protecting the environment means protecting humankind. Caring for the patient also means caring for their environment.

Integrative oncology has its rightful place within this context. Complementing conventional cancer treatments, it combines validated and high-quality complementary therapies aimed at improving quality of life by reducing side effects and strengthening treatment compliance. It places the patient at the center of the care pathway, in a holistic, coordinated and sustainable approach.

Sustainability for the patient

Beyond preventing sequelae, improving quality of life during treatment is correlated with better survival rates, as demonstrated by Montazeri's meta-analysis [6]. The more patients maintain their functional status during treatment, the better the therapeutic outcomes. The randomized

double-blind placebo-controlled study by Frass *et al.*, in 2020 [7], confirmed these results and highlighted the value of complementary approaches such as homeopathy in oncology. The significant improvement in all quality-of-life parameters in the homeopathy group translated into a doubling of two-year survival time compared with placebo and a tripling when compared with the control group ($p = 0.02/\text{placebo}$; $p < 0.001/\text{control}$).

Homeopathy and One Health

In terms of sustainability, homeopathy offers a particularly compelling example. Consider *Arnica montana* (Fig.1). It represents 5.5% of homeopathic prescriptions in France [8] and is the most frequently prescribed homeopathic medicine. It is used in integrative oncology, particularly after surgery, in emotional shock states or for certain musculoskeletal pains. Two randomized double-blind placebo-controlled trials showed a significant reduction in blood loss and seroma (lymphocele) formation ($p = 0.033$) in the *Arnica montana* group [9,10]. In its guidelines, the International Homeopathic Society for Supportive Care in Oncology (SHISSO) recommends prescribing a single 30c dose (or 10 pellets) when resuming oral fluids after each operation [11]. In the Delphi HOMEoRUN 2025 study, carried out with 56 international experts, a strong consensus emerged from the first round in favor of using *Arnica montana* after breast cancer surgery (86%), with a preference for 30c dilution [12].

Beyond its therapeutic use, *Arnica montana* perfectly illustrates the link between human and environmental health. Its harvesting is authorized only under management agreements, with collection limited to 50% of the mature resource to ensure natural regeneration. Growing only on soils free of chemical fertilizers, it requires protection of the natural site and prevention of overgrazing. In 2022, due to insufficient flowering, a moratorium was declared in the Vosges to preserve the species. Harvesting techniques developed by researchers facilitated regrowth. Remarkably, a single *Arnica montana* flower could theoretically provide a 30c dilution for the entire world population.

Sustainability for the healthcare system

Integrative oncology contributes to strengthening the resilience of healthcare systems. It tends to reduce rehospitalizations, improve treatment compliance, lower complication rates, and above all, decrease drug consumption.

The use of Paracetamol in France is particularly striking. In 2023, 538 million boxes were sold [13], equivalent to nearly 6.5 billion tablets—or 17 boxes sold every second. The EPI3 study demonstrated a 60% reduction in analgesic use among patients treated by homeopathic physicians compared with those treated by conventional physicians (OR = 0.40; 95% CI: 0.20–0.82), with comparable therapeutic effectiveness [14]. Extrapolated to the entire French population, this would represent 323 million fewer boxes of paracetamol consumed annually, or nearly 4 billion tablets avoided, reducing both patient exposure and environmental release via excreta. Similar calculations could be extended to other drug classes such as anti-inflammatories,

antibiotics, and psychotropics, whose use was reduced by 46%, 57% and 71% respectively in the EPI3 study [14–16]. These findings highlight the major potential impact of integrative approaches on the sustainability of healthcare systems, benefiting both patients and ecosystems.

Sustainability for society

Sustainable health also encompasses the social dimension. After cancer, returning to work, maintaining social ties and reducing dependency are major challenges. Homeopathy can support these delicate transitions: *Selenium* helps patients overcome their fear of returning to work; *Arsenicum album* supports those trapped in anxiety about illness, contagion, or death; *Phosphorus* encourages reintegration into family and social life and *Causticum* helps ease the fear of relapse.

Homeopathy in integrative oncology

The effectiveness of homeopathy in managing cancer treatment side effects [7,17], its lack of major adverse effects [18,19] and its low cost make it the most widely used complementary medicine among cancer patients in France [20]. The absence of drug interactions and its clear role as supportive care also explain its acceptance among general practitioners and oncologists [21].

Patient perspectives

Patient satisfaction with homeopathic care in oncology is very high. In the Strasbourg study, 41.3% of surveyed patients reported being “greatly” helped by homeopathy and 41,3% “fair”. The most frequent improvements concerned fatigue, pain, nausea, anxiety, sadness, diarrhea and sleep disorders [20] (Fig.2). In a recent qualitative study conducted among patients attending an integrative oncology day hospital, the homeopathic consultation was experienced as a moment of attentive and reassuring listening, enabling patients to share their feelings in an atmosphere of trust, kindness and humanity. They also valued the holistic approach, thorough clinical examination and clear explanations about their cancer disease and their conventional treatments [22]. Homeopathic treatment was clearly understood as complementary rather than alternative. Considered effective and sustainable over time, it reduced side effects—particularly orphan symptoms—and decreased reliance on conventional medication.

Sustainability for healthcare professionals

Integrative oncology benefits not only patients but also healthcare professionals. It restores their confidence in their practice, fosters more human relationships with patients and reduces the risk of burnout [23]. Listening, communication and specific training in integrative oncology are essential.

Conclusion

Despite limitations due to insufficient funding and institutional recognition, several changes are gradually being put into place: a growing number of publications increasing patient involvement as agents of change, greater interdisciplinary collaboration and the creation of a chair of integrative health at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers in Paris. The experience of countries such as Germany and Switzerland shows that institutional recognition of this approach is possible.

Integrative oncology is not an optional option. It addresses a necessity: offering patients' sustainable health that extends beyond medical cure to encompass quality of life, prevention of sequelae, and environmental preservation [24]. Investing in integrative approaches means investing in the future: a future where patients are supported in all their dimensions, where healthcare professionals rediscover meaning in their work, and where medicine is rooted in ecological and social responsibility. Integrative oncology, in our view, represents one of the great future pathways of medicine.

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Figure 1 : *Arnica montana* (photo Bagot JL)



Figure 2: Satisfaction rates in the homeopathy subgroup by symptom in the Legrand study conducted in Strasbourg 2021 [20].

