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**Editorial****A Program to Improve Quality of Life  
for those Dealing with Cancer****Ann E Fonfa\****Annie Appleseed Project, Delray Beach, USA***Editorial**

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in January 1993 while suffering from extreme Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS). After reviewing my treatment options I decided against chemotherapy. My treatment plan involved making dietary changes and eating only organic. But even then I felt that it would be important to incorporate daily physical activity, and continue my usual course of enjoying the small things in life.

I founded a cancer advocacy nonprofit Annie Appleseed Project which went online in June 1999. I was also running an educational program called Whole Health in which (mostly) women with cancer discussed options. We discovered early on that the things I did to keep myself well, worked to help those using conventional therapies, well too. We discovered Integrative Oncology. The main focus was the use of nutrition as a base for better health.

In 1995 I started attending medical, scientific and educational meetings around the country. In the first few years, I went to NYS Conference on New and Emerging Technology for Breast Cancer, 1995, National Breast Cancer Coalition Advocacy Training Conference, 5/93, First International Congress on Alternative & Complementary Medicine, 1994, Breast Cancer and the Environment, Columbus, OH, 1994 New York City, 1995, New York State Breast Cancer Conference, Albany, NY 1995, National Breast Cancer Coalition Advocacy Training Conference, 5/94, National Breast Cancer Coalition Advocacy Training Conference 5/93, and the Foundation for Advancement in Innovative Medicine, NYC 1993.

I am an Advocate who asks a lot of questions and I began to ask why studies were not being done on the use of chemotherapy with antioxidants – in fact some oncology patients were being told to avoid fruits and vegetables! I asked why studies were done on the ‘active’ element of a food or other natural substance. To me the whole food, the whole plant, the entire herb was what our bodies have proven to need. Thousands of years of human use ought to matter for research standards. Over and over researchers told me they HAD to look at active elements - that’s how they got funded.

Research is still being done in this way even though no useful drugs have been developed from foods. In fact I strongly suggest that nutrition need not be, ought NOT to be studied as a pharmaceutical item. This is the proverbial fitting of the square peg into a round hole. Natural substances need the co-factors in the original item, be it food, plant or herb.

One reason this research has not leaped forward, is the lack of interest from the Pharmaceutical industry. At many of the conferences I still attend each year, I am told that they have “no interest as it cannot be patented”. I talk to my fellow Advocates about this and ask why we should be guided by this? We NEED to talk about a nutritional approach; we need plants and herbs, spices and more in our lives.

Annie Appleseed Project is an all-volunteer Patient advocate nonprofit and we have spent years gathering/ sharing information about simple, natural strategies to reduce risk of cancer treatment-related toxicities and strengthen the immune system. Further not everyone will benefit from conventional cancer treatments so we continue to support the right of all to choose what is still called ‘alternative’ therapies. In fact some of the prior years’ ‘alternatives’ are now much more accepted into the mainstream. Upon my own diagnosis in January 1993 I was told to avoid Yoga unless I wanted to kill myself, told that what I ate didn’t matter at all, not to do exercise and of course the Immune system was not involved with cancer. ALL of these ideas are now understood to be completely false.

Annie Appleseed Project volunteers created a simple program 3 Steps 4 Health that absolutely anyone with cancer, at any stage, can incorporate into their own healthful protocol. Since it involves no tools and can be used at the level that an individual is at the time they start, we consider it appropriate for all. Further we cannot see any objection from the Oncologist or staff members. In fact it really has a wider appeal – but we are Advocates for people with cancer.



Figure 1: Annie Appleseed project.

(Figure 1) Eat one more fruit and one more vegetable every day. This is helpful since studies show few Americans are getting enough fruits or vegetables. The National Cancer Institute considers 'Five a Day', a minimum. We want to get people started on the correct path simply and easily.

(Figure 2) Take a walk around the room, facility or neighborhood depending on ability and health status. This has been shown by many studies to help anyone with cancer, undergoing treatment or in recovery. We are not asking folks to become athletes; we are involving them in a plan to improve their health.

(Figure 3) Take 7 deep breaths before treatment, in a stressful situation or at bedtime. This step is important to reduce stress and encourage relaxation. There is joy to be found daily - this helps people relax enough to find it.

Every step moves people forward into better health. We believe taking these first steps will lead to more healthful behaviors, better ability to handle conventional cancer treatments, and an easier recovery. Many people are motivated to take more steps as they see benefits almost immediately. We've already had feedback from physicians and nurses who assure us that their patients seek information on what they can do to help themselves when diagnosed with cancer – this is the program. It can be useful in early stage, during treatment and for better survivorship.

Immune system health depends on the individual as much as any treatments. In this era of Immunology, we see a real opportunity for our Patient/Advocate-driven concept.

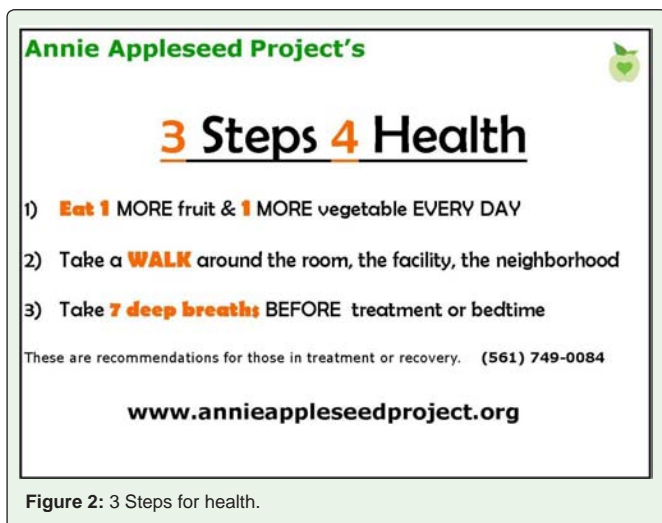


Figure 2: 3 Steps for health.