

“HO HO THE MISTLETOE,
HUNG FOR YOU TO SEE,
SOMEBODY WAITS FOR YOU,
KISS HER ONCE FOR ME’*"

THE USE OF MISTLETOE FOR HEALING

By Julie Foster

For several years I have experienced the healing effects of Mistletoe in cancer patients. More recently I found its use rather fits our times more , than just for treating a disease. For instance, when there is difficulty bringing all parts of oneself together (trouble waking up, falling asleep, concentrating, etc), feeling solid about one’s place in life (love of your work, who you are or have become, etc.), repeated traumas, trouble generating internal warmth, or where the body has a tendency to seal off and make tumors or lumps within organs or on the skin----- puts one at risk for cancer.

Most of the diseases of our times are slow to develop and create depletion over a long period of time, compared to 100 years ago or so, where life threatening illness were more acute and inflammatory . Unlike the Bubonic Plague or the Small Pox, which wiped out masses of people from acute inflammation, cancer is thought to be an epidemic of our times. Nearly all of us have at least one person close to us who has experienced cancer. I for one, without counting my exposure as a medical provider, have had my father (Kidney), my husband (Testicular), both grandfathers (Prostate), and several close friends with devastating diagnoses. It is like living in a battlefield, where one doesn’t know when the next soldier will be hit.

There is some belief that cancer happens when the body loses its warmth-producing qualities. For instance, my husband, who had been a ‘hot-blood,’ about a year before his cancer diagnosis became more cold, requiring extra clothing and blankets when he slept. Once he cleared the cancer his warmth returned.

Cancer has been described as a cooling illness, whereby processes of cell division proliferate indefinitely without ever dying off. With the advent of vaccines, anti-inflammatories for fevers, fast-paced lifestyles, over emphasis on technology, bottle-fed babies, lack of nutrients in our soils, food additives, and toxins in our environment, we have deprived our natural mechanisms for creating strong immunity for vibrant health. I feel weary when a patient tells me that they never get sick, because the body must from time to time cleanse and purify through illness. Choosing wisely when and if to vaccinate; nursing a fever appropriately; making essential time to be calm and enjoy life; creating a balanced exposure for being in nature vs. limiting extended exposure to technology and media; breastfeeding; and consuming live healthy foods and water are some ways to support the best health.

The way Mistletoe grows gives us the clue as to why this medicine works so well in cancer treatment. It remains green all year long, independent of light, storing up chlorophyll in the darkness of the wood in which it has buried itself. The berries ripen in winter (out of sync) without warmth, just as cancer works out of sync, imposing on our bodies’ normal physiological processes. Mistletoe is freed from the conditions to which other plants must submit. It must,

like cancer, have a host to live on to sustain itself growing in trees such as oak, apple, or pine. In malignant growth the boundary between the organism and nature no longer lies merely on the skin, in the sense organs, the inner intestinal wall, the lumina of the glands, but is now transferred into the physical body itself at the border between the tumors and the surrounding tissue (Husemann & Wolff, 2003). Likewise, the boundaries of host trees are breached so that mistletoe can grow and thrive.

Mistletoe (also known as *Viscum*, *Iscador* or *Iscar*) is a plant that has been used by Anthroposophical doctors to treat cancer and other sclerotic illnesses since the 1920's. Rudolf Steiner, the originator of Anthroposophical medicine, considered mistletoe to be one of our most important remedies. Mistletoe has shown to be effective in vitro, that is in the laboratory, against tumor cells in two manners. The first is a direct anti-tumor activity mediated by substances within the Mistletoe that attach to and rid cancer cells in the body (viscotoxins). The second is by indirect immune stimulation (lectins). There is good evidence that a number of immune functions are stimulated by Mistletoe therapy, which aids in the healing of the imbalance with cancer. There is also a growing body of clinical evidence that Mistletoe is in some cases highly effective when used alone, but also effective when used in conjunction with chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery (Kienle, Kiene, & Albonico, 2006). Mistletoe has shown a benefit for overall survival, quality of life, and reduction of side effects from chemotherapy and radiation (Kienle, Kiene, & Albonico, 2006). A myriad of research already exists in Europe, where some hospitals have specialized in this therapy for over 50 years. Currently, this medicine is under investigation by the National Institute for Health (NIH).

If Mistletoe is prepared homeopathically, in that 'like cures like,' healing takes advantage of this growth pattern and one's body is inspired to heal from the inside out. Otherwise known as a poison, Mistletoe as a homeopathic becomes an ally. Mistletoe generates warmth forces and engages our most positive self to create a fire within. During treatment we look for a reaction of increased warmth as a rise in temperature and sometimes a fever. Igniting the warmth within; the whole being can effectively clean house. In essence our immunity is brought to the front line again and the nonessential is burned away. A veil can be lifted and people may see themselves more clearly. One's heart can be opened.

I knew of a young woman who had uterine cancer. She had been through 5 rounds of chemotherapy. She was exhausted from the treatments and couldn't bear to continue. She had researched Mistletoe on her own. By the time she presented to the clinic she had metastases in her lungs. The other side of her story was that her husband was abusive, and within her culture she was being judged for not becoming pregnant right away after the marriage. In her religious beliefs, she was told that she couldn't have cancer that young. She was told by her community that she was making it up. Meanwhile she could barely get herself to treatments. After a period of Mistletoe therapy, she not only tolerated higher doses of the 6th round of chemotherapy, her metastases had retracted, and more profoundly she found her place amongst her community in a strong way. She began to speak out about her story. She divorced her husband when it was unheard of in her culture. She maintained her place among her community and became a nurse. At one point, her mother and father asked why she had such strong opinions, when prior as the eldest of 8 children care took of the others without ever questioning the demands. I find that in this woman's story she was able to discover her inner fire and personal power to direct her will for her life's work and path. She physically healed, though more importantly she came to know

herself in a higher form. I have in the past, and continue over time to witness this effect in others who have chosen Mistletoe therapy.

Interestingly, when I ventured to look at Mistletoe from a historical perspective I found that in ancient times Mistletoe was considered to be 'The Golden Bough,' that gave access to the underworld. Mythology of Egyptian, Greek, Norse, and East Indian cultures refer to Mistletoe as the metaphorical womb of the earth. I see this as a need to return to oneself, to the mother, who we pass through to be here on Earth, or as a remembering of one's place again. Norsemen's word for mistletoe was 'Guidehel,' the same as 'guide to hell.' Another meaning might mean that mistletoe helps us 'through the hell' of cancer, something so foreign and mindboggling. Multiple metaphors can be inferred for meaning and understanding the place Mistletoe has in our day and age. Anachronistic in its nature, Rudolf Steiner implied that Mistletoe is a plant that has remained from the Earth's evolutionary past (Bott, 1984) as gifted from the Old Moon.

One Legend :

For its supposedly mystical power mistletoe has long been at the center of many folklore. One is associated with the Goddess Frigga. The story goes that Mistletoe was the sacred plant of Frigga, goddess of love and the mother of Balder, the god of the summer sun. Balder had a dream of death which greatly alarmed his mother, for should he die, all life on earth would end. In an attempt to keep this from happening, Frigga went at once to air, fire, water, earth, and every animal and plant seeking a promise that no harm would come to her son. Balder now could not be hurt by anything on earth or under the earth. But Balder had one enemy, Loki, god of evil and he knew of one plant that Frigga had overlooked in her quest to keep her son safe. It grew neither on the earth nor under the earth, but on apple and oak trees. It was lowly mistletoe. So Loki made an arrow tip of the mistletoe, gave to the blind god of winter, Hoder, who shot it, striking Balder dead. The sky paled and all things in earth and heaven wept for the sun god. For three days each element tried to bring Balder back to life. He was finally restored by Frigga, the goddess and his mother. It is said the tears she shed for her son turned into the pearly white berries on the mistletoe plant and in her joy Frigga kissed everyone who passed beneath the tree on which it grew. The story ends with a decree that who should ever stand under the humble mistletoe, no harm should befall them, only a kiss, a token of love. What could be more natural than to translate the spirit of this old myth into a Spiritual way of thinking and accept the mistletoe as the emblem of that Love which conquers Death? Its medicinal properties, whether real or imaginary, make it a just emblematic of that Tree of Life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations thus paralleling it to the Virgin Birth of Christ.

I have witnessed the positive attributes of Mistletoe so many times that now that I feel ethically compelled to offer this therapy where deemed appropriate. Even in patients who are terminal, I believe from an esoteric point of view that Mistletoe will help a person cross over and ascend into the next stage of life.

The medicine is given primarily by self-injection. It is also given orally, topically and on rare occasion intravenously. Injections occur on a schedule, usually with a series of shots interspersed with 1-2 week breaks. The frequency and timing of Mistletoe varies depending on the type, whether the person is undergoing chemotherapy or radiation, or depending on the stage of the illness. The therapy must be guided by a licensed medical provider.

Mistletoe extracts are used in cancer for both adjuvant and palliative purposes, either alone or in combination with chemotherapy or radiation. Many Anthroposophical doctors also suggest other remedies and healing modalities to support a person going through cancer treatment. As appropriate these might include remedies for pain, for cardiac and liver support, for enhancing immunity and the constitution. Nutrition and a healthy mindset are also keys to healing.

If invited, Mistletoe walks with you through life's most trying tribulations. It has the capacity to assist us to remember who we are, lines us up for our innate goodness, and calls forth the strength to face all within our worldly realm. Ultimately, we all are capable. LOVE WHICH CONQUERS DEATH, penetrates our souls in a higher way beyond our initial understanding. So why is it that we aspire to kiss under the Mistletoe in the dark of these wintery nights? Think about it. When everything shakes out in life, what is left? When someone receives a cancer diagnosis or a chronic debilitating disease a person asks many questions:

Who am I? How do I want to live my life? What really matters? Does Love, Beauty, and Connection unite us all?!

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*Lyrics from the song Holly Jolly Christmas written by Johnny Marks