

Abstract

# The Use of Dietary Supplements in Cancer Patients <sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract:** Background and objectives: The use of dietary supplements is extremely common among cancer patients. It is estimated that 20–90% of cancer patients use some form of dietary supplement. Most often, they are “self-selected” supplements or selected from unverified Internet sources, without consulting a specialist. Components in such supplements can interact with the applied therapy and impact cancer patients’ treatment. The aim of this study was to examine the frequency and type of supplementation used by cancer patients. Methods: A cross-sectional observational study was conducted on 52 cancer patients (mean age: 58 years) by using a study-specific questionnaire, conducted between February and July 2022 at the University Clinical Hospital Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Results: More than half of the respondents (62%) use some dietary or herbal supplements daily. The most common dietary supplements were probiotics (22%), B complex vitamins (22%), and vitamin D (22%). Patients (46.8%) used supplements based on their own or their family–friend’s recommendation, and 90% of them started to use supplementation during therapy. The main reason for use, as stated by 71.8% of the respondents, was to support immunity. Approximately 56.2% of them said that they had noticed a positive effect on their health. It is concerning that 78.8% of patients did not research the possible side effects and risks of taking supplements during therapy. Conclusions: Doctors, nutritionists, and nurses should improve communication with patients by giving them reliable information and evidence-based recommendations about dietary supplements and complementary therapy in general. During consultations, professionals should offer assistance and discuss potential benefits and risks with the patient in order to achieve a mutually informed decision on dietary supplement use.

**Keywords:** cancer patients; dietary supplements; nutrition counseling



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