



# Turning-The-Tables

An Interview with Helayne Waldman ED.D., M.S., CNE

By Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

**When her father was diagnosed with small-cell lung cancer in 1994, Helayne Waldman knew it was lethal. She researched ways to support his health and did the best she could considering she was a layperson, not a practicing nutritionist. A single mom at the time, Waldman worked as a trainer in field-readiness and marketing for a database firm. Her father died in four months, planting a seed that Waldman later nurtured into a healing profession for people living with and dying from cancer.**

**“It was quite traumatic,”** Waldman says. “It was devastating to me to lose my father and to watch what mainstream treatment did to him.”

**A few years later** a beloved aunt was diagnosed with cancer. Waldman researched again, looking for ways to support her aunt’s health using nutritional means rather than rely solely on traditional medicine, knowing the devastation chemotherapy and radiation create in the name of cancer treatment (the side effects often debilitating in themselves). Shortly thereafter, Waldman felt her focus transition from training to teaching, from marketing databases to promoting health and wellbeing. She had already entered a holistic nutrition program when she learned that a dear friend was diagnosed with a glioblastoma—an aggressive, fatal, brain tumor. Waldman knew at that point that nutrition was not just a passion but a

career, and that she needed to specialize in helping those with cancer. She did a ton more research and helped to extend her friend’s life for another year with nutrients and supplements. Together, these experiences enabled Waldman to come forward with a deep, profound passion for helping people through their cancer, before and after treatment. She knows nutrition, and she has an intimate caregiver insight—she’s seen what happens in people’s lives, she knows the nightmares and, in some cases, can make them less so.

## Client Care

**The first step** for Waldman is knowing where clients are in their stage of treatment—what has the client chosen to do? Some come in preparing to have surgery. Some may have chemotherapy and/or radiation slated for after surgery. Some come in post-surgery looking for support.

Meeting during this initial decision making process is actually a tricky time to connect.

**“I have so many** of my own biases against traditional treatment,—they don’t know what they’re in for—I do. Chemotherapy, radiation, the drugs they use are carcinogenic—they lead to secondary cancer. My heart hurts when I see women scared into something that may not be in their best interest, but it’s between them and their practitioners (*usually an oncologist or a breast surgeon*). It’s not my place to talk them out of what they and their doctor decide to do,” Waldman says.

**“I can educate them** about the basics of staying strong through surgery. I can build them up for surgery—make it easier to recover and detoxify from the anesthesia. After surgery I can help speed up recovery with whole foods and nutrients.

“There are many nutrients, herbs, supplements, and whole foods that can help women through their journey. My role on the team involves helping to mitigate the side effects of traditional treatments by keeping the body as strong as possible.”

**If they are going** for chemotherapy, I can help mitigate the immediate and long term side effects and help maintain blood counts—chemotherapy and radiation cause white and red blood cell counts to drop drastically. I can help maintain an appetite, quell nausea, support more energy, and manage the side effects of neuropathy (*chemotherapy damages nerve cells resulting in loss of sensitivity of touch, pain, burning, and tingling in the hands, fingers, feet and toes, muscle weakness and balance problems, and cramping in the hands and feet*).

**High doses of radiation** are used to kill cancer cells but it also damages healthy cells in the treatment area. Side effects are noted as itchy, peeling, blistering skin, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, and swelling, with later side effects ranging from joint pain and lymphedema to secondary cancer. Waldman knows which foods are radio protective and can protect the

non-target tissues that are getting hit. For example, mung beans contain vitexin (a naturally occurring flavone C-glycoside and lignan compound identified in various plant sources) and isovitexin that have been shown to induce apoptosis (a normal physiological process designed to eliminate DNA-damaged cells and unwanted cells; when halted it may result in uncontrolled cell growth and tumor formation) and suppress tumor growth. Mung bean anticancer effects have been demonstrated against hormone-related cancers (Yao, Cheng, Ren, 2011; Cheng, Shan, Ren, Chen, & Wang, 2008). And studies have also shown that eating some form of mung beans on a daily basis helps stop blood counts from dropping as much and wards off fatigue.

“**The real art comes** in knowing which food for which condition,” Waldman says. She mentions miso and black cumin seed to mitigate the effects of radiation damage and protect normal healthy tissue. Miso (fermented soy bean paste) has radioprotective effects, and it also contains the phytochemical genistein that cuts off blood flow to cancerous tumors (anti-angiogenesis); it basically suffocates the tumor (Watanabe, 2013; Ohara et al., 2001). There are topical gels and ointments derived from flowers such as calendula officinalis (common name marigold) that include lutein and beta-carotene. Calendula extracts have demonstrated anti-inflammatory properties as well as antibacterial, anti-parasitic, and anti-tumor properties (retrieved from [www.mskcc.org/cancer-care](http://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care)). Women can spread it on their breast to soothe radiation burns, Waldman says.

“**There are many nutrients,** herbs, supplements, and whole foods that can help women through their journey,” Waldman says. “My role on the team involves helping to mitigate the side effects of traditional treatments by keeping the body as strong as possible.

“**After treatment,** we try to make sure there is no recurrence. If they come in DCIS or stage 1, then the cancer has been caught early. If it’s a tiny lump, they may have a lumpectomy and nothing else. We can change the terrain in the body so that it is no longer hospitable to a cancer growing there. We need to look at the parameters of what is going into their body that made it hospitable to cancer cells and then work to alter that terrain.

### **Changing the Terrain**

**Waldman focuses** on toxins and ways clients can reorganize their lives to avoid many toxins. For starters? Personal care products such as makeup, shampoo, and lotions have phthalates and parabens in them that are endocrine disrupting chemicals. Antiperspirants have aluminum in them. It’s not hard to change to coconut oil, Waldman says, noting that it is a better moisturizer, a better emollient. She looks at what people can get out of their life that they have some control over. We have no control over many toxins she says, even organic foods are tainted with heavy metals.

**Waldman works** with clients to enhance the body’s ability to eliminate toxins. She can support the liver, explaining that if there is a big traffic jam in the system, the body





will not function well. For instance, if you are not having a bowel movement every day those toxins are being stored, primarily in fat (adipocytes). Fat cells, especially abdominal, issue distress signals sending local immune cells into action pumping out cytokines (immune system hormones) causing inflammation. “Inflammatory chemicals are like fertilizer for cancer,” Waldman says.

**Another example** Waldman offers involves sugar—it invites cancer back. When people eat foods loaded with sugar, the body compensates for the high levels of glucose with high levels of insulin. Insulin is a high level growth promoter for cancer as well as a potent inflammatory hormone. Waldman works with clients to get their insulin and glucose levels as low as possible so there are no excess inflammatory chemicals in the blood stream. “Those chemicals are welcoming to incipient cancer,” Waldman says.



**She also looks at** what nutrients her clients are getting from their diet and where they may be deficient. Nutrients that play a strong part in anti-cancer treatment include the following: vitamin A; vitamin D; vitamin C; the mineral zinc; selenium; magnesium; iodine; and trace minerals. All are potent protective nutrients. Her clients may not be getting enough from their diet because our food is processed, depleted, devitalized—they are grown in depleted soils, Waldman says. Chromium and vanadium, deficient in our soils, are our two main blood

sugar managing minerals (interacting with insulin). While vanadium has not been established as an essential micronutrient in our diet, biological effects such as insulin-mimetic action have been discovered and multiple biochemical and molecular actions have been implicated in its inhibitory effects on various tumor cells of human origin. In several animal cancer models, vanadium demonstrated protection against all stages of carcinogenesis: initiation, promotion, and progression. (Bishayee, Waghay, Patel, & Chatterjee, 2010). Monocropping doesn't help either—some minerals, such as potassium and phosphorous are put back in the soil with commercial fertilizers, but micro minerals are not; the soil becomes depleted. Our food is shipped long distances, microwaved, and boiled, which all deplete the nutrients we need.

**“I can take a look at a person’s diet** and see what they are eating that is helping to support health and what they are eating that depletes it.” Waldman says. “Processed food is health depleting food. A pure whole food diet is essential; it underlies everything. You can take all the supplements you want, but they will not make a difference if you are eating the standard American diet. You have to get the junk out. Most things out of the ground that are natural and whole are good. But if you are eating animal meats they have to be raised as they were meant to be raised: if it’s a cow, it needs to be eating grass; if it’s a chicken, it needs to be eating bugs. These animals were not designed to eat GMO corn and soybeans. What they eat, we wind up eating as well.”

**Tests can determine** vitamin D, zinc, iodine and magnesium levels. Then, Waldman can fill in the gaps. “It’s like a house being built, story by story,” she says. “The foundation is your diet, the second floor is your individual nutritional needs. Beyond



that are your unique metabolic needs. She looks at high blood sugar, insulin, inflammation. “We can use herbs and supplementation such as black cumin and turmeric—they are powerful anti-inflammatories. Bitter melon is another food – a member of the squash family often taken as a supplement – with profound glucose-lowering effects, and a documented ability to down regulate the Her2Neu protein associated with some particularly aggressive breast cancers. So the last story is to take what we know about herbs and spices that have pronounced anti-cancer activity and make sure they are front and center.”

**And, there are broccoli sprouts.**



Chemotherapy kills cancer cells but not the cancer stem cells. Broccoli sprouts will kill cancer stem cells. While Waldman cannot claim 100% stem cell death, research does show that broccoli sprouts do kill cancer stem cells, and they are a strategic addition to your diet. Dr. Paul Talalay, a researcher at John Hopkins School of Medicine, demonstrated that broccoli sprouts contained powerful phytonutrients known as sulforaphanes and glucosinolates, cancer fighting compounds that offer 20 to 50 times more cancer fighting

ability than from the mature adult broccoli plant (cooking broccoli or steaming for longer than 4 minutes destroys any cancer-fighting properties) (Retrieved from [www.jhu.edu/jhumag\\_0408web/talay.html](http://www.jhu.edu/jhumag_0408web/talay.html)).

**The skin from red apples** contains triterpenoids that either inhibit or kill cancer cells; they also help up-regulate maspin (a tumor suppressor gene), which has strong anti-proliferative effects on breast and prostate cancer cell growth, (Retrieved from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/06/070601181005.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/06/070601181005.htm)) while the skins from lemons can help prevent cancer cells from clumping together. There's strength in numbers, but cancer cells cannot form a colony because the citrus pectin gets in the way of clumping, which inhibits tumor formation, Waldman says.

**“We can come** from many different directions: vitamin A and vitamin D are differentiating agents. Cancer cells can be almost generic in nature—that is, they don't have the same cellular characteristics as the cells of the target organ. Pathologists grade cancer on how different a tumor's cells are it is from those in healthy tissue. If it is somewhat different, then it is a low grade tumor. If the cell is markedly different, if it is poorly differentiated, then that tumor is more difficult to treat. Vitamin A and vitamin D help from that perspective by coaxing the cells to move back to a state closer to a normal cell.

**“It's like the spokes** of a wheel with cancer at the center. We find every possible angle we can around that wheel to come in and make it harder for cancer to do its thing,” Waldman says.

**“If a tumor has grown** over 2 millimeters, it needs nourishment. It sends the word out signaling to recruit blood vessels to form a network around it to feed it. Thermography works brilliantly to

help detect these tumors because the tissue is more highly vascularized. Even if it is a tiny tumor, if it starts the process (known as angiogenesis) it will show up as a pattern of heat (excessive blood vessel activity). There are even natural substances to help block this process. Curcumin and sea cucumber extract are just a couple of them,” Waldman says.

**“Cancer cells are wily.** They secrete chemicals that camouflage them from the immune system. When you enhance the immunize system, natural killer cells go after the tumor and get a little better at detecting it. Other substances can be used to help unmask cancer cells so they become naked to the immune system; this is another avenue we can use to make these rogue cells view-able, detectable to the immune system.

**“The point I am getting at** is that there are so many different approaches that can be taken because we know what cancer cells do: we know they create a blood supply; we know they stick together; we know they make the blood thick—the viscosity helps them move. We know they secrete inflammatory chemicals. Fish oil decreases the viscosity of the blood. You can also use healthy fats and oils (fish oils, walnut, flax, coconut, avocado, and olive oil) to help modulate inflammation levels.”

### **Self-Care in Cancer Care**

**“Cancer survivors** tend to fall into the group of feeling victimized with a ‘poor me’ feeling that I completely understand. But, I want people to know they are so much more powerful than they think. The fact is, the only person who can save you is you. Even if you believe in conventional treatments, they only go so far. And after you are done with treatment, your doctors may simply say, ‘Okay, the cancer is gone, go have a nice life.’ There is such a need for women, in particular, to feel like

now is where I get to do my thing. I'm in charge. I'm empowered. I can make myself better, keep myself healthy. It's all about empowerment. If I can help women to understand the power that is in their hands, then I've done my job well,” Waldman says.

**The flip side of empowerment,** however, is responsibility. Waldman co-authored, *The Whole-Food Guide for Breast Cancer Survivors: A Nutritional Approach to Preventing Recurrence*, with Dr. Edward Bauman. They write that eating a lot of sugar and processed foods will contribute to cancer growth. Some women may feel blamed as if they are responsible for their cancer. It's not that you created the cancer, Waldman says, it's that you have to take responsibility for what damage you may have done to your body. There is fine line between blame and responsibility. And when you take control of your day to day habits, it becomes empowering. Neither Waldman nor anyone else can wave a magic wand and make your cancer go away but as human beings we have a will and can make dozens of small decisions every day on our own behalf. And that's powerful, she says.

**“I couldn't save** my father, my aunt Yetta, or my friend Kathleen. I wish I knew then what I know now. I could have made them more comfortable,” Waldman says. “But those losses did move me out of work that held little meaning for me. I feel now that I am serving. I have a mission, and maybe I'm supposed to be fulfilling it here. That is satisfying.”

You can find Helayne at [www.wholefoodguideforbreastcancer.com](http://www.wholefoodguideforbreastcancer.com) or on Facebook at Whole Food Guide for Breast Cancer. Interested clients may want to review her practice website at [www.turning-the-tables.com](http://www.turning-the-tables.com)

**Dr. Helayne Waldman, ED.D., M.S., CNE,** is a holistic health educator who specializes in providing nutritional *continued on the bottom of page 29*