



Cancer Diagnosis Turns Summer Upside Down

by Sandra Hahn, RN, Nurse Navigator

Summer began for the Regalado family in the usual busy manner. Ashley, 15, was very active. She played softball, soccer and was on the Dallas High School wrestling team.

No one was particularly worried when Ashley's knee started bothering her. She went in and had it checked and it seemed likely that it was a usual teen-age strain. After it didn't get better, the providers ordered X-rays and an MRI.

Life in the Regalado family suddenly changed. The test suggested that instead of the usual teen-age injury, Ashley might have cancer.

A trip to Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland for a bone biopsy confirmed that Ashley has osteosarcoma, a life-threatening aggressive cancer. This cancer requires treatment that begins with 10 weeks of chemotherapy, then surgery and then more chemo, lasting most of a year.

Her chemo is different than it usually is for adults because she must take it in the hospital over a course of three to five days at a time. Even if she gets



Members of the Regalado family

a week off, she might need to be hospitalized for side effects.

On her father's and youngest sister, Isabella's, birthday (July 30), Ashley and her family made their third trip to Doernbecher. She went to surgery to

get a port-a-cath placed and was admitted to the hospital for the rest of the week.

She had her first doses of what her pediatric oncologist (children's cancer doctor) says is the hardest chemotherapy there is. Ashley has never had

a serious illness in her life. Her first stitch was for a bone biopsy and now here she was getting an IV port in her chest!

Suddenly, life is a confusing whirlwind – Ashley was quickly hospitalized and started a very strong course of chemotherapy. Now the Regalados must try to figure out how to be many places at once – with Ashley, at work, with their other four daughters.

They also must figure out how to pay for lodging, travel, child care, food away from home, and missed paychecks. They must try to understand this complex, long and harsh treatment, and support their family emotionally.

How can you help? First needs are financial. Please make donations at OSU Federal Credit Union to the Ashley Regalado Medical Relief Fund.

Secondly, support Ashley in other ways. If you have other resources that might be helpful, please call either your local community health representative or the Siletz Clinic.

Please keep this family in your hearts, thoughts and prayers.

Tooth Talk

by Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

Native American Ethnobotany, con't.

Many differences exist between Western medicine and American Indian medicine. One has nothing to do with HMOs or insurance companies. Nor is it that Indian medicine uses plants as drugs.

The difference I am speaking of is that Indian medicine is a melding of knowledge with spiritual and cultural perceptions involving ritual, ceremony, relationship and celebration of the world in which we live.

The knowledge American Indians have shared with immigrating Europeans contributed to present-day Western medicine. "In fact, it is believed that at least two hundred of our modern prescription medicines were derived from Native American herbs. Today, synthetic duplications of natural herbal compounds, as well as naturally grown herbs themselves, account for numerous over-the-counter medicines."¹

Do herbal medicines work? This is where the blending of culture and knowledge steps in. In *Native American Ethnobotany*, Daniel E. Moerman summarizes that "definitions of health and well-being are often cultural matters; they are rarely simple matters of 'fact.'"²

He offers an example of *Lobelia inflata* that induces vomiting. It has several English common names, among them emetic herb, vomit wort, and pukeweed. It contains a series of alkaloids but the one probably responsible for its major actions on the human body is *Lobeline*. The Iroquois used *Lobelia inflata* to induce vomiting; they soaked the whole plant in cold water, then drank it.

"In the European tradition as recently as the early twentieth century (and very often in many other medical traditions as well) people understood that illness was in part the result of certain kinds of imbalances in body's 'humors.' Certain humors (blood, bile or phlegm, for example) accumulated at the expense of others and the healer's goal was to attempt to re-establish the proper balance. One way to achieve this was often to purge the sick individual, to cause him to vomit."

So does it work? Well, a physician in the European tradition and an Iroquois healer probably could agree that *Lobelia* is an effective emetic – the drug works. Why do the Iroquois want to induce vomiting?

They use this emetic to cure a sufferer of "tobacco or whiskey addiction." It's at this point that the Euro-American and the Iroquois might find themselves at odds, the latter saying it does work and the former saying it does not work.

Similarly, the Cherokee are reported to use *Lobelia inflata* as an emetic (now we have a triple agreement) to cure asthma (and now we have a triple disagreement). Whereas the Euro-American, the Iroquois, and the Cherokee are likely to agree on one dimension of these treatments (emesis), they might disagree about others. Asking about the effectiveness of a drug, then, is not a simple biological or medical issue but also a complex problem of culture and meaning.³

The spiritual aspects of American Indian healing "are tightly, intricately

and unchangeably woven into the tapestry of an American Indian's daily life. It's the combined healing of the spirit, heart and mind that makes medicine work. For Native peoples, the word medicine does not simply describe some physical thing such as a capsule, pill, potion, lotion or powder (or even surgery); it also speaks of the greater 'power behind the cure.'"⁴

"It is this spiritual belief that dictates the procedures and ceremonies that are to be followed when herbs and other plants are gathered."⁵ Cichoke offers a brief outline for gathering herbs used by the Navajo on page 3.⁶

"Pick herbs early in the morning and begin by burning juniper, smudging some of the soot on your skin, and praying to the sun deity. Then make a prayer offering of cornmeal to the plant, telling the plant your name and that you want to use the plants to heal.

"Then ask permission to pick the plant's fellow plants and wait for the plant to give permission. This can be in the form of a vibratory connection between the picker and the plants; perhaps the winds blows or you get an intuitive feeling or hear songs. And if the plant does not give permission, you do not pick that day.

"You don't pick the plant you are praying to, because it is your emissary to the plant world. You then give an offering to the earth, then the sky, then the four directions, starting with the east and going clockwise. And also honor the middle. Also put cornmeal on your head. This is a connection to the spirit world and so a sign of purity. Some

plants don't want to come, some pull easily and some won't. It is also important to never take more than you need and always leave at least one-fourth of what's there."⁷

The following statement came from the Web site called American Indian Medicine. "To most American Indians, medicine signifies an array of ideas and concepts rather than remedies and treatment alone. There is no separation between religion and medicine in tribal culture and healing ceremonies are an integral part of the community experience ... the natural or correct state of all things, include man, is harmony."⁸

- 1 *Secrets of Native American Herbal Remedies*, Anthony Cichoke, D.C., PH.D, Avery, p. 1.
- 2 *Native American Ethnobotany*, Daniel E. Moerman, Timber Press, sixth edition, p. 12.
- 3 *Native American Ethnobotany*, Daniel E. Moerman, Timber Press, sixth edition, p. 12
- 4 *Secrets of Native American Herbal Remedies*, Anthony Cichoke, D.C., PH.D, Avery, p.3.
- 5 *Secrets of Native American Herbal Remedies*, Anthony Cichoke, D.C., PH.D, Avery, p.3
- 6 *Secrets of Native American Herbal Remedies*, Anthony Cichoke, D.C., PH.D, Avery, p.3
- 7 *Secrets of Native American Herbal Remedies*, Anthony Cichoke, D.C., PH.D, Avery, p.3
- 8 <http://altmed.creighton.edu/AmericanIndianMed/>, American Indian Medicine