

## STATEMENT

### LIFE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Deutsche Krebsgesellschaft e.V. Straße des 17. Juni 106-8, 10623 Berlin

## **Integrative Medicine: An Approach to Oncology?**

**Prof. Dr. Michael Bamberg,**

**President of the German Cancer Society**

When I first heard about the inaugural European Congress for Integrative Medicine in 2008, I was uncertain what “integrative medicine” actually meant. Not yet widespread, this new term denotes the attempt to settle the historic dispute between conventional and alternative medicine by investigating whether certain combinations of the two are effective.

Every physician is aware of the rift between the conventional and alternative medicine communities. In fact, this rift is one of the reasons why new therapeutic approaches are often portrayed in such a one-sided manner, often to the detriment of conventional medicine. This advertising strategy for alternative therapies is frequently tied to economic interests in ways that are not immediately apparent, making it difficult for patients to reach educated treatment decisions. In recent years, there have been a number of dramatic cases in which cancer patients have chosen unproven alternative treatments over effective, evidence-based therapies. With slick advertising campaigns presenting individual success stories without a shred of underlying evidence, some proponents of alternative methods have acquired the dubious reputation of “cancer gurus.” When confronted with the devastating diagnosis of cancer, many patients resort to unproven panaceas, which can lead to economic ruin and medical disaster for them and

## Der Präsident

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their families alike.

The goal of integrative medicine is to use established research standards within large clinical trials to study the economic and medical efficacy of alternative treatment methods. This is an important field of study. Whether this goal can be achieved will be seen in the results of ongoing and future studies.