



# Ruqyah and Its Use among Patients with Cancer

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## Abstract

In this article, we reviewed ruqyah from past to present and its use among patients with cancer to attract attention to the importance of ruqyah. Ruqyah, one of the mind–body interventions among complementary and alternative medicine therapies, refers to the healing method based on the Quran and hadith through the recitation of the Quran, seeking of refuge, remembrance, and dua (supplication) that is used as a means of treating sickness and other problems, by reading ayats of the Quran, the names and attributes of Allah, or by using the duas in Arabic or in an understandable language. Ruqyah is frequently used in patients with cancer in combination with medical treatment, and many patients benefit from ruqyah practices. It is usually used to improve emotional and physical well-being, relax, cope with the disease, strengthen the immune system, increase vitality, decrease pain and stress, treat disease, accelerate the healing process, increase the duration of life, improve sleep quality, reduce side effects associated with treatment, and to be self-sufficient. Ruqyah is a complementary method for modern cancer treatment. It is not an alternative to chemotherapy and cannot directly replace medical treatment. Patients can perform ruqyah by themselves without applying to Muslim faith healers or spiritual healing centers. It can be by everyone regardless of their religion and belief. Although ruqyah has been successfully used in various social, mental, spiritual, and physical disorders for over 1,440 years, there are limited randomized controlled trials about its use in patients with cancer due to lack of cooperation between health professionals and Muslim faith healers applying ruqyah. Therefore, we suggest that health professionals develop joint projects and studies with Muslim faith healers and Islamic religion professionals on this subject. Finally, we strongly believe that ruqyah must be integrated into mainstream modern medicine as in the “Malaysia model” in both developing and developed countries.

## Keywords

- ▶ ruqyah
- ▶ cancer
- ▶ spiritual care

## Introduction

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is the term for medical products and practices that are not part of standard medical care.<sup>1</sup> Complementary medicine, CAM, integrated medicine or integrative medicine, and holistic medicine are among many re-brandings of the same phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> CAM modalities can be divided into five categories:

- *Alternative medical systems.* Examples of these systems include traditional Chinese medicine, ayurvedic medicine, homeopathy, and naturopathy.
- *Mind–body interventions,* which include practices that are based on the human mind, but that have an effect on the human body and physical health, such as meditation, prayer, and mental healing.

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- *Biologically based treatments.* This category includes specialized diets, herbal products, and other natural products such as minerals, hormones, and biological substances.
- *Manipulative and body-based methods.* Examples of these methods are chiropractic and massage therapy.
- *Energy therapies.* Examples of this category include qigong, reiki, and therapeutic touch.<sup>3</sup>

Scientists learn about CAM therapies every day, but there is still more to learn.<sup>1</sup> In addition to seeking conventional treatment from physicians, cancer patients often use religious/spiritual resources and CAM. These themes include providing treatment or cure, supporting treatment or cure, being part of life, preventing cancer and recurrence, substitution for conventional treatment, and as a last resort.<sup>4</sup>

Ruqyah, a mind–body intervention, refers to the healing method based on the Quran and hadith through the recitation of the Quran, seeking of refuge, remembrance, and dua (supplication) that is used as a means of treating sickness and other problems, by reading ayats of the Quran, the names and attributes of Allah, or by using the duas in Arabic or in an understandable language.<sup>5</sup> In this article, we review ruqyah and its use among patients with cancer to attract attention to the importance of ruqyah.

## Ruqyah: From Past to Present

People have been praying to Allah since Prophet Adam (Alayhi As-Salam), the first man and the first prophet. The dua of Prophet Adam (Alayhi As-Salam) and his wife Hawwa (Eve) is mentioned in the Quran as follows: “They said: Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: If Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost.”<sup>6</sup> Today, most major religions involve prayer in one way or the other; some ritualize the act, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practiced spontaneously by anyone at any time.<sup>7</sup>

Preservation of life is one of the five universal principles in Islam.<sup>8</sup> The Quran commands as “Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful!”<sup>9</sup> So it is forbidden for people to harm themselves materially and spiritually in Islam. The word dua means “calling, ask for, request help,” “demand and supplication that occurs from small to big, from bottom to top.” The texts expressing the requests to be submitted to Allah verbally or in writing are also called dua. In the Islamic literature, it refers to the servant’s confession of his helplessness in the face of Allah’s majesty, and asking for His grace and help in feelings of love and reverence.<sup>10</sup>

Ruqyah means “to read and blow a part of the Quran, Divine names and attributes or a dua for the purpose of healing or protection.”<sup>11</sup> Ruqyah (plural: ruqa) derives from the past tense of the verb raqa. It consists of words said or written in the form of dua or dhikr for the purpose of protection or cure. It is sometimes accompanied by other actions, such as blowing or wiping over the thing that it is applied to. “It should be done by reciting the words of Allah,

may He be exalted, or His names and attributes, and in Arabic or in a language the meaning of which is understood, and with the belief that ruqyah has no effect in and of itself; rather it is only effective by the will of Allah, may He be exalted.”<sup>12</sup> The form of these duas written and carried on paper is called amulet.<sup>11</sup>

Ruqyah and amulet were used by Arabs during the Age of Ignorance. The Jahiliyyah Arabs wore amulets with different names on their necks to eliminate the effects of secret powers and to protect them from the evil eye. They believed that soothsayers and sorcerers who read and breathed by holding the head or aching organ of the sick gave them health.<sup>11</sup> The age of ignorance (jahiliyyah) is an Islamic concept referring to the period of time and state of affairs in Arabia before the advent of Islam in the 610th year of the Common Era. The term jahiliyyah is derived from the Arabic verbal root jahala, which means “to be ignorant or stupid, to act stupidly.”<sup>13</sup>

The ayats of the Quran are comprehensive in that they denote and indicate all the categories of speech and true knowledge and human needs, like command and prohibition, promise and threat, encouragement and deterring, restraint and guidance, stories and comparisons, the Divine ordinances and teachings, the sciences related to the universe, and the laws and conditions of personal life, social life, the life of the heart, spiritual life, and the life hereafter. So the truth of the saying, “Take whatever you want from the Quran for whatever you want” has come to be accepted to such a degree by the people of reality that it has become proverbial among them. There is such comprehensiveness in the ayats of the Quran that they may be the cure for every ill and the sustenance for every need.<sup>14</sup>

The Quran is both a reminder, an idea, wisdom, science, truth, shariah, shifa (cure) for hearts, and a guidance and a mercy for believers. The Quran is strength and food for the hearts and healing for the souls.<sup>15</sup> It has been recorded that the Quran is shifa in various ayats.<sup>16–18</sup> In addition, it is advised to seek refuge in Allah from the evil of evil creatures, especially Satan, approaching people with his delusions, in the Quran.<sup>19–23</sup> In the Quran, the words of “rak” (raki) in Surah Al-Qiyamah<sup>24</sup> and “neffâsat” in Surah Al-Falaq<sup>22</sup> are used, which means “to read and blow.” In Surah Al-Qiyamah, when a person who is about to die is in his throat, “Isn’t there someone who can save him from this situation and cure him?” The desire of his relatives to seek a doctor is expressed with the word “blower” (raki). Interpreters of the Quran note that this means “the reader who is resorted to as a last measure in case of helplessness.” Both believers and unbelievers apply to it as a final consolation.<sup>25</sup>

There are many hadiths about the ruqyah that was applied to Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam [SAW]) by Gabriel when he was sick, that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) applied ruqyah to himself, that He (SAW) applied and advised ruqyah to his family and people for healing and protection from evil.<sup>10,26</sup> Hadith is a record of the words, actions, and silent approval of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as transmitted through chains of narrators. In other words, hadiths are transmitted reports about what Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said and did.<sup>27</sup>

It was narrated that Abu Hurayra<sup>28</sup> (one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad [SAW] and the most prolific narrator of hadiths) said: “The Prophet (SAW) came to visit me (when I was sick), and said to me: ‘Shall I not recite for you a ruqyah that Gabriel brought to me?’ I said: ‘May my father and mother be ransomed for you! Yes, O Messenger of Allah!’ He said: ‘Bismillah arqika, wallahu yashfika, min kulli da’in fika, min sharrin-naффathati fil-uqad, wa min sharri hasidin idha hasad’ (In the Name of Allah I perform ruqyah for you, from every disease that is in you, and from the evil of those who [practice witchcraft when they] blow in the knots, and from the evil of the envier when he envies), three times.”<sup>29</sup>

Aisha (wife of Prophet Muhammed [SAW]) reported that whenever Allah’s Messenger (SAW) became ill, he used to recite the Muawidhatan (i.e., the last two Surahs of the Quran: Surah Al-Falaq and Surah An-Nas) and blow his breath over himself (after their recitation) and rubbed his hands over his body. So when he was afflicted with his fatal illness, she started reciting the Muawidhatan and blowing her breath over him as he used to do and then she rubbed the hand of the Prophet (SAW) over his body.<sup>30</sup> Aside from physical disorders, the Prophet (SAW) commanded ruqyah for snakebites, scorpion stings, and to treat the evil eye.<sup>31,32</sup>

One of the events that took place about ruqyah in the period of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is as follows: Some of the companions of the Prophet (SAW) came across a tribe among the tribes of the Arabs, and that tribe did not entertain them. While they were in that state, the chief of that tribe was bitten by a snake (or stung by a scorpion). They said (to the companions of the Prophet [SAW]), “Have you got any medicine with you or anybody who can treat with ruqyah?” The Prophet’s companions said, “You refuse to entertain us, so we will not treat (your chief) unless you pay us for it.” So they agreed to pay with a flock of sheep. One of them (the Prophet’s companions) started reciting Surah Al-Fatihah and gathering his saliva and spitting it (at the snake bite). The patient got cured and his people presented the sheep to them, but they said, “We will not take it unless we ask the Prophet (whether it is lawful).” When they asked him, he smiled and said, “How do you know that Surah Al-Fatihah is a ruqyah? Take it (flock of sheep) and assign a share for me.”<sup>33</sup>

Based on the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), ruqyah is not exclusively performed by certain group of Muslims. As a form of dua and incantation, asking from the only all over powering Allah, for the healing of any ailments, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) taught his companions various forms of ruqyah, originating from the hadith and the Quran.<sup>34</sup> Some other specialties and training are not needed to practice ruqyah. Patients themselves or their relatives or friends without applying to Muslim faith healers or spiritual healing centers can perform ruqyah. Ruqyah can be applied not only for Muslims but also for all patients, regardless of language, religion, race, or color. Ruqyah is not exclusively for conditions thought to be caused by jinn disturbance. It can be used in all material and spiritual diseases or disorders.

Islamic scholars have noted that ruqyah made for the purpose of healing or protection from evil are permissible, while ruqyah practices that lead to shirk and abuse are

haram.<sup>11</sup> Türkiye Presidency of Religious Affairs High Council of Religious Affairs has stated that it is permissible to recite the Quran and duas about healing to the sick, hoping for a cure from Allah, and it is religiously forbidden to practice a healer to deceive the public and inform about the unseen.<sup>11</sup> Allah rules the universe with His absolute will, and everything in the universe happens by the will and will of Allah. The Originator of the heavens and the earth: When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: ‘Be,’ and it is.<sup>35</sup> So ruqyah is only effective by the will of Allah. One’s ihlas (sincerity) is also important for the ruqyah to be effective. Whatever a man seeks with ihlas, Allah will grant him it.<sup>36</sup> Ihlas means pure, clean, sincere, and without hypocrisy. Ihlas is observing only the consent of Allah in every work and especially in worship, and avoiding showing off, hypocrisy, cheating, and deceit.<sup>36</sup>

Although ruqyah has been used in various social, mental, spiritual, and physical disorders for over 1,440 years, there are limited randomized controlled trials about its use in the modern literature. Ruqyah practice can improve one’s calmness, spiritual quality, and happiness as a characteristic of an individual’s mental health. Ruqyah practices are an effort to restore human fitrah (nature) that has inner peace and happiness.<sup>37</sup> Dein and Illaiee<sup>38</sup> noted that embracing complementary treatment options such as ruqyah will help engagement and concordance, and possibly enhance the service user’s well-being.

Ruqyah is widely used by Muslim faith healers, playing an important role, and is popular among patients seeking treatment in Malaysia.<sup>39,40</sup> An Islamic spiritual healing center is open to all races and religions in Malaysia. Islamic spiritual healing practitioners deal with a multitude of problems. There are no specifications the kind of problems they treat. People have a range of reasons from asking prayers for the newborn, common ailments, serious illnesses like cancers and stroke, and illnesses afflicted by supernatural agents.<sup>41</sup> Many organizations in Malaysia representing faith healers, for example, Gabungan Pengamal Pengobatan Islam Malaysia, the Federation of Islamic Faith Healers Organizations of Malaysia, Gabungan Pertubuhan Pengamal Perubatan Melayu Malaysia, and the Federation of Malay Traditional Healers Organizations of Malaysia, are trying to integrate “ruqyah” as a treatment into mainstream modern medicine, via the Ministry of Health.<sup>39</sup> Drug addicts are successfully treated by using ruqyah in various Islamic drug rehabilitation centers integrated with modern medicine in Malaysia.<sup>42</sup> Razali et al<sup>43</sup> integrated the use of ruqyah with modern medicine, and have emphasized that ruqyah would not merely serve as complementary but as a crucial part in an integrated treatment system.

Ruqyah therapy has begun to be popular in Indonesia in 2003.<sup>44</sup> The editorial board of Ghoib Magazine introduced ruqyah to its readers and explained how to apply ruqyah in people’s lives by attracting the attention of the readers.<sup>45</sup> Then ruqyah therapy has been a hope for many people with the spread of information about ruqyah. Ruqyah is effectively used in the treatment of patients with mental and physical disorders in ruqyah clinics in many districts in Indonesia.<sup>44,46</sup>

Ruqyah is also practiced in certain places that provide official medical treatment and on television and YouTube in Indonesia.<sup>47</sup>

In Saudi Arabia, ruqyah (roqia or ruqia) is commonly used by patients with many acute and chronic disorders such as eczema, mood disorders, and psychiatric conditions including anxiety, depression, and suicide ideations.<sup>48</sup> Faith healing is common in Iraq and ruqyah is used in about half of patients with psychiatric illnesses.<sup>49</sup> Ruqyah is also frequently used in the treatment of mental disorders by Muslim faith healers in Ghana (Kpobi).<sup>50</sup>

In Türkiye, ruqyah is frequently used in coping social, mental, spiritual, and physical disorders and is usually practiced by Muslim faith healers (hoca, hoja or hodja). Hocas provide various services, including counseling and advice; social and spiritual support; reciting the Quran; and dua to the patient directly or to drinks or foods that the patient consumes such as water, wheat, rice, or barley. They also perform amulet comprising ayats of the Quran for protection, use of incense for protection, break sihr (magic) casts by an adversary, remove evil eye, remove jinn from body, and cupping. On the other hand, people themselves and/or their relatives without applying to hocas perform ruqyah by using dua, dhikr, tasbih (tasbeeh), and salah (salat or namaz). Canel Çınarbaş et al<sup>51</sup> studied Muslim faith healers' treatment procedures and results, and they reported that physical, psychosocial, and spiritual symptoms in vast majority of patients improved after using ruqyah. Although ruqyah is frequently used in Türkiye and many patients have noted its positive effects, scarce studies have been done on the efficiency of ruqyah for the following reasons:

- Most physicians do not know that one of four dimensions of health defined by the World Health Organization is spiritual health.<sup>52</sup> So physicians are almost always interested in the physical health of a man, but not the spiritual health.
- Most physicians do not know what ruqyah is because of limited studies about the effect of ruqyah on health in the medical literature.
- There is a lack of cooperation between health professionals and hocas applying ruqyah. Health professionals and hocas work independently of each other, trying to treat patients.

## Use of Ruqyah in Cancer

Spirituality plays a prominent role in the lives of most palliative patients whether or not they formally adhere to a specific religion and belief.<sup>53</sup> Turning to faith in Allah or a higher spiritual power is a common way of coping with life-threatening disease such as cancer.<sup>54</sup> Martel et al<sup>55</sup> noted that the most used CAM is spiritual/mental strategies among children with cancer. A positive and significant relationship between spiritual well-being, mental health, and quality of life was found in cancer patients.<sup>56</sup> Bahakim<sup>57</sup> noted that faith in and reliance on Allah were the immediate factors that helped parents cope with the diagnosis of cancer. Although most patients with chronic diseases, mostly cancer, do pray

for relief from their physical and mental suffering, the intention of their prayers is not only for healing but also prayers can be a resource that allows patients to positively transform the experience of their illness.<sup>58</sup> Among 31,044 participants, 1,904 had a prior diagnosis of cancer, of whom 40% reported CAM and 62% reported the use of prayer for health during the year before the survey. Controlling for socioeconomic factors, it was found that cancer survivors significantly used more CAM and prayer for health than the general population in the United States.<sup>59</sup> Jors et al<sup>58</sup> reported the reasons and topics of prayers can be classified into five main categories: (1) disease-centered prayer, (2) assurance-centered prayer, (3) Allah-centered prayer, (4) others-centered prayer, and (5) lamentations. Ruqyah has some differences from these prayers in the following ways: "Ruqyah should be done by reciting the words of Allah and He or His names and attributes may be exalted, in Arabic or in an understandable language. It should be performed with the belief that ruqyah has no effect in and of itself; rather it is only effective by the will of Allah, may He be exalted."<sup>12</sup>

The use of CAM including ruqyah is very common among oncology patients (→ **Table 1**). Montazeri et al<sup>60</sup> reported that 35% cancer patients used CAM and the most commonly (75.7%) used CAM was prayer and spiritual healing. Atteiah et al<sup>61</sup> noted that 68.1% patients with brain tumor used CAM and the most common types of CAM were zamzam (water originating from the holy land in Makkah [93.9%]), ruqyah (85.7%), and holy water (water upon which the Quran has been read [73.5%]). In the series of Jazieh et al,<sup>62</sup> 90.5% patients with cancer used CAM: reciting the Quran (74.8%), zamzam water (59.8%), holy water (29.8%), dua (16%), and supplications to the patient directly or to foods or drinks that a patient consumes, such as honey or water (13%). The majority of patients (90%) used CAM as a cancer treatment and the rest used it for various reasons, such as symptom control or supportive treatment. Only 18% of the patients discussed CAM use with their physicians, compared with 68% discussing it with religious clergymen (Sheikhs).<sup>62</sup> In another series, the prevalence of CAM use was 69.9% in patients with cancer; dua was used in 95.4% of patients with cancer, Quran recitation in 88.1% of patients, zamzam in 84.4% of patients, and holy water in 63.3% of patients. Most patients (75%) used CAM to treat cancer, enhance mood (18.3%), control pain (11.9%), enhance immune system (11%), increase physical fitness (6.4%), and improve appetite (4.6%). Thirty percent of CAM users had discussed the issue with their doctors; only 7.7% had done so with their nurses.<sup>63</sup> Akhu-Zaheya and Alkhasawneh<sup>64</sup> found a positive correlation between chemotherapy and the number of CAM therapies used in oncology patients. The highest stress-reducing CAM techniques included reading the Quran (74.8%), dua (69.9%), and ruqyah (34.1%).<sup>64</sup> In another study, a significant improvement in the general subjective feeling in cancer patients was observed after ruqyah application.<sup>65</sup> Hematti et al<sup>66</sup> found that listening, reading, and watching the text of the Quran were useful for increasing life expectancy in palliative radiotherapy patients. More than 60% of the patients stated that more frequent recitation would lead to

**Table 1** Studies about the use of ruqyah among patients with cancer

Sl no.	Type of study	Patient number	Cancer types	Reasons of using ruqyah	Practitioner of ruqyah	Content of ruqyah	Conclusion of study	Study
1	Questionnaire-based study	625 patients with cancer (some of them used ruqyah)	Breast, gastrointestinal, urogenital, head and neck, and others	The use of complementary medicine among cancer patients was associated with the fear of cancer recurrence and dissatisfaction with their care physician	Patients themselves	Prayer and spiritual healing	Apart from the prayer and spiritual healing, the use of other common methods of complementary medicine among cancer patients is unpopular	Montazeri et al <sup>60</sup>
2	Questionnaire-based study	453 patients with cancer (most of them used ruqyah)	Cancer (no mentioned types)	Cancer treatment, symptom control, and supportive treatment	Patients themselves and religious clergy people (sheikhs)	Quran, prayer, supplication, water with the Quran recited over it	The use of complementary therapies including ruqyah among patients with cancer is highly prevalent, with a predominance of interventions of religious background	Jazieh et al <sup>62</sup>
3	Questionnaire-based study	123 patients with cancer (most of them used ruqyah)	Digestive/gastrointestinal, hematology, breast, musculoskeletal, genitourinary, gynecological, head and neck, and respiratory	To minimize side effect of traditional treatment, decrease psychological pressure and distress, dissatisfaction with conventional treatment, and disease control	Patients themselves	Reading the Quran, praying, and ruqyah	Patients tend to use combined complementary therapies including ruqyah to augment and support with conventional medical treatment	Akhu-Zaheya and Alkhasawneh <sup>64</sup>
4	Randomized controlled trial	64 patients with leukemia (spiritual care program including ruqyah was applied to all of them)	Leukemia	To determine the effects of a spiritual care program on anxiety of patients with leukemia	Patients themselves and clergyman	An MP3 player and earphones to listen to Quran, prayers, and azan. Reading the tawasol prayer and Quran at the patient's bedside was also implemented by a clergyman	Spiritual care program could successfully decrease anxiety levels in patients with leukemia. Therefore, nurses have to apply a holistic care approach with emphasis on spiritual care	Mosini et al <sup>68</sup>
5	Questionnaire-based study	89 palliative radiotherapy patients (all of them used ruqyah)	Cancer (no mentioned types)	Subjective well-being, increasing life expectancy, and greater reassurance	Patients themselves	Quran recitation (listening, reading, and watching the text of the Quran)	Listening, reading, and watching the text of the Quran are useful for increasing life expectancy in palliative radiotherapy patients	Hematti et al <sup>66</sup>
6	Case report	One patient	Desmoplastic <i>small round cell</i> tumor	Control pain, improve mental health, and control sleep problem	Skilled individual Islamic healer	General ruqyah practice	Pain disappeared and mental health and sleep problem improved after ruqyah	Adynata and Idris <sup>44</sup>
7	Questionnaire-based study	156 patients with cancer (most of them used ruqyah)	Solid tumor, hematological malignancy	Treatment for cancer, enhance mood, control pain, enhance the immune system, increase physical fitness, and improve appetite	Patients themselves	Supplication, Quran recitation, and water upon which the Quran has been read	Three-quarters of complementary medicine including ruqyah users felt some improvement in mood, appetite, physical strength, immunity, and reduction of pain after use	Abuelgasim et al <sup>63</sup>
8	Questionnaire-based study	200 patients with cancer (all of them used ruqyah)	Breast, colorectal, colorectal/rectum, leukemia, liver, lung, lymphoma, nasopharynx, ovary, stomach, and others	General subjective feeling	Skilled individual Islamic healer	General ruqyah practice	Patients significantly feel better after receiving ruqyah. None of the participants had a negative response or attitude toward ruqyah	Alshammary et al <sup>65</sup>
9	Questionnaire-based study	72 patients with cancer (most of them used ruqyah)	Brain tumor	It is good without harm, gets rid side effects of cancer therapy, improves psychological well-being, promotes better health generally, strengthens body against cancer, and eliminates cancer	Patients themselves and Islamic scholars	Quran reading, water with the Quran recited over it	More than two-thirds of patients with brain tumors used complementary medicine including ruqyah. The majority decided to continue using both complementary medicine and conventional medicine	Atteiah et al <sup>61</sup>
10	Randomized controlled trial	159 patients with cancer: Quran (n = 53) control (n = 53) music (n = 53)	Hodgkin's lymphoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, multiple myeloma, liver, breast, prostate, pancreas, and leukemia	To assess the recitation of Quran and music to reduce chemotherapy-induced anxiety	Authors of the article	Listening to Quran recitation	Listening to Quran recitation reduced the chemotherapy-induced anxiety in patients	Al-Jubouri et al <sup>67</sup>

higher life expectancy and/or greater reassurance.<sup>66</sup> Listening to the Quran reduced the chemotherapy-induced anxiety.<sup>67</sup> Spiritual care program including two major components of supportive presence and support for religious rituals (Quran, prayers, and azan) successfully decreased anxiety levels in patients with leukemia.<sup>68</sup> It has been reported that pain disappeared and mental health and sleep problem improved in a 39-year-old man with desmoplastic small round cell tumor after ruqyah therapy.<sup>44</sup>

Hosseini et al<sup>69</sup> reported that the Islamic perspective of spiritual intervention including ayats of the Quran showed significant reduction in dopamine gene receptor expressions in breast cancer patients. The authors concluded that spiritual intervention based on Islamic principles can bring back mental health, increase hope and quality of life, and eventually change dopamine gene receptor expressions resulting in reduction of cell proliferation, thus better prevention and management in breast cancer patients compared with other forms of treatment.<sup>69</sup> Saliva cortisol levels and depression scores were lower, but the quality of life and spiritual life quality values were higher in patients with cancer who applied self-ruqyah treatment program than those of the control group.<sup>70</sup>

CAM comprising ruqyah is frequently used in patients with cancer in Türkiye. It is usually used for the following purposes: to improve emotional and physical well-being, relax, cope with disease, strengthen immune system, increase vitality, decrease pain and stress, treat disease, accelerate the healing process, increase the duration of life, improve sleep quality, reduce side effects associated with treatment, and to be self-sufficient.<sup>71</sup> All patients used at least one CAM in a series consisting 1,499 patients with cancer and the most commonly used CAM was prayer (99%).<sup>72</sup> Can et al<sup>73</sup> noted that all 96 patients with cancer used one or more CAM therapies. The CAM used were prayer (77.1%), worship (32.3%), meditation (5.2%), prayer support (3.1%), visiting saints (3.1%), and amulet (1.0%). In other two series, use of praying was 81.60%<sup>68</sup> and use of prayer and spiritual healing was 49%.<sup>74</sup> Karalı et al<sup>75</sup> reported 73.3% parents of children with cancer used at least one CAM method and 43.2% families used body–mind practices such as offerings, animal sacrifice, amulets, referring to prayer leaders, and visiting tombs. In a series including 112 children with cancer, 77% parents used at least one CAM and 55% parents used the bind–body method (prayer).<sup>76</sup> Gözüm et al<sup>77</sup> reported that of the 88 parents of children with cancer, 48.9% parents reported the use of one or more CAM therapies and 18.9% parents used spiritual healing. In another series, 61% cancer patients used at least one CAM including amulet and prayer and 53.2% patients reported CAM to be beneficial.<sup>78</sup> The word “ruqyah” has not been mentioned in these studies conducted in Türkiye. The terms “pray,” “prayer,” “praying,” “prayer support,” or “spiritual healing” have been used to express words with many different meanings such as “ruqyah,” “dua,” “dhikr,” “salah,” or “worship.”

There are some difficulties and limitations about the use of ruqyah in hospitals. First, hospital officials, health professionals, and caregivers have insufficient knowledge about ruqyah. Second, ruqyah is incorrectly perceived as prosely-

tizing by some people. As a consequence, health professionals who know the importance of ruqyah cannot recommend ruqyah to their patients due to the reactions of nongovernmental organizations and associations. Third, patients who want to practice ruqyah cannot do ruqyah in hospitals because they are afraid of the reactions of health professionals. Additionally, there are no prayer rug, rosary, the Quran, tafsir, and prayer books for patients who want to practice ruqyah in wards. Finally, there are no imams or clergymen to perform ruqyah in most hospitals.

## Conclusion

Ruqyah means “to read and blow a part of the Quran, Divine names and attributes or a dua for the purpose of healing or protection.” Ruqyah should be performed with the belief that ruqyah has no effect in and of itself; rather it is only effective by the will of Allah. Surah al-Fatihah in the Quran is one of ruqa. It can be used in all material and spiritual diseases or disorders. Patients themselves or their relatives or friends without applying to Muslim faith healers or spiritual healing centers can perform ruqyah. Ruqyah can be applied in everyone regardless of their religion and belief.

Ruqyah, one of the mind–body interventions in CAM therapies, is a complementary method for modern cancer treatment. It is not an alternative to chemotherapy and cannot directly replace medical treatment. Ruqyah is frequently used in patients with cancer in combination with medical treatment and many patients benefit from ruqyah practices. Ruqyah provides a source of comfort and guidance for many patients with cancer. So we think that ruqyah is the right of every patient. Although ruqyah has been successfully used in the treatment of various disorders for centuries, there are limited randomized controlled trials about its use in patients with cancer because of lack of cooperation between health professionals and Muslim faith healers in applying ruqyah. Therefore, we suggest that health professionals develop joint projects and studies with Muslim faith healers and Islamic religion professionals on this subject. On the other hand, we strongly believe that ruqyah must be integrated into mainstream modern medicine like the “Malaysia model” in both developing and developed countries. For this purpose, first, physicians should be informed about the use of ruqyah and then more randomized controlled trials should be performed on this subject. Second, ruqyah should be promoted to patients with cancer and their relatives through scientific societies, civilian organizations, and the media. Third, the ministry of health officials should be informed that some patients greatly benefit from ruqyah practices in addition to chemotherapy.

## Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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