

Smoking defeats advances in fighting cancer

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Cancer patients are just as likely to develop cancer as anyone else. There's no reason why I couldn't develop cancer tomorrow. One of my very close friends who was a leader in cancer research died of lung cancer several years ago. From our own personal standpoint we have a great interest in curing cancer. The treatment of cancer patients is not as profitable as the treatment of many other diseases. Surgeons with the highest income in the country, for example, are cardiovascular and plastic surgeons.

What's your opinion of people who think like that?

Those involved with patient care and if the research area feel very badly that there are people out there who sit back and have that kind of interpretation of what is going on. I have a hard time dealing with the attitude from the public sphere that I'm doing this because I'm making a lot of money. It strikes to the heart of the physician who deals with cancer patients on a day-to-day basis. I can assure you that the cosmetic side is much more profitable than the seriously ill side.

Why is there so much confusion about the different forms of cancer?

I think there's a problem with journalists. They need to talk to the investi-

gators who have done a study so that they understand how the results were worked. It's very easy to pick up a scientific article, for example, read the summary statement and publish that coffee causes pancreatic cancer. That isn't a fair analysis of the study — or of what the investigator intended — and it certainly isn't fair to the reader. There's a responsibility among journalists to pay enough attention to what's said and hopefully take the next step and talk to the individuals with expertise and ask, "is it fair for us to run a headline that says coffee causes pancreatic cancer?" I don't think there are many people who would say that's reasonable.

You hear talk about polynyl plants and other industrial environments contributing to cancer. Are business and industry the culprits?

There is an increase of cancer in polynyl plants, but the number of studies in industry-produced cancers, with the possible exception of asbestos, is relatively small. There have been extensive studies with the polynyl exposure here in Michigan, and the data is anything but convincing that there's any relationship to malignant disease. That's not to say that it doesn't play some role, but it certainly isn't the solution to our problem. Business and industry are easy targets that people have been comfortable with. I think

we're going to find in the 1980's that industry and big business are going to be important components in cancer and malignant disease in terms of finding solutions. It's important to keep things in perspective. There are many areas that need to be pursued, and it isn't crucial to select one in favor of another. The whole search strategy in looking at environmental factors is technology to determine how one variable out of hundreds might be contributing to the problem. It's a major stumbling block.

Are the chances of being cured of cancer increasing?

There certainly is an increase in the cases of cancer being seen each year, but that may well reflect the fact that the population as a whole is growing older. Cancer, to a certain extent, is an age-related process. We're pleased that we're beginning to make an impact on

some of the more common tumors. Fourteen cancers that a few decades ago had very poor prognoses are being cured, including types of leukemia, Hodgkin's disease, lymphatic cancer, testicular cancer, ovarian cancer and breast cancer. But people's perception of what progress is is difficult to grapple with. With regard to the number of lives saved, we've outstripped a number of diseases that have been wiped out. Yet, since we think of cancer as an all-embracing term, we say we still don't have a cure for cancer. To ask for a magic key just doesn't seem to be a reasonable expectation. One of the simplistic notions with regard to cancer is that it's just another infectious disease — that we can find the virus that causes cancer, grow it in a culture flask and vaccinate people. That's an unrealistic analysis of the problem. It's quite clear that cancer represents several hundred different diseases with complicated and multiple causes.

Hopefully we will find a cure. But until then we must be satisfied with controlling the disease and improving the quality of life.

What's happening with the American Cancer Society? Is its research paying off?

If you look at the price tag for our progress thus far, we're really advancing quite cheaply. But just to put it into perspective, the cost of gas alone for the lift-off of the space shuttle amounted to more than what our budget allows us to purchase in a year. The nation has to set some priorities if they expect us to cure cancer, but I guess someone up in Washington has to set these priorities. The ACS supplies tremendous amounts of help. No one can compete with the federal government when it comes to spending, even if the total price of cancer research last year was just one-tenth of the shuttle's pricetag.

But the ACS is a very important source of research funding. It donates crucial seed dollars for grant programs that enable fresh, young investigators to get involved in cancer research. The society's volunteer efforts with regard to cancer education for lay people and aid for cancer patients — helping them adjust to their disease and handling their problems — are very helpful. We interface with the society at many levels through a lot of people.

What can the public do to help?

Thank God the public expects so much from us. I think that's the reason we have to work so hard. But the public should do its own share. If I'm working with somebody to prevent cancer, they should listen to me. There's nothing wrong with getting a second opinion, but once you get expert opinions, take them instead of searching for the opinion that appeals to your biases.

Man arrested in drug bust

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Agents from the DEA, a division of the Department of Justice, along with Livonia undercover agents, have had Pennell under investigation for some time, police said.

Pennell was arraigned in U.S. District Court on a charge of intent to dis-

tribute cocaine. He was released on \$25,000 personal bond pending pretrial examination.

Livonia police said the street value of the cocaine would run anywhere from \$60,000 to \$100,000.

Police said the investigation continues.

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