

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“Cancer: Can it Spontaneously Disappear ?”

Previously, I have discussed the turbo-charging of cancer cells by antioxidants and of the fact that more than half of all people born in 1960 will develop cancer at some point in their lives. We are stunned to know that, for men, the risk of developing cancer is one in two, especially for cancers of the bowel, prostate and skin (melanoma). Further, I have told you that some forms of immunotherapy can cost over one million dollars a year and that cancer cells can be induced to commit suicide. Now, I want to discuss the subject of "spontaneous regression (SR)" of cancer. Spontaneous regression of cancer is defined as a complete or partial, temporary or permanent disappearance of tumor or cancer in the absence of any specific therapy. Spontaneous regression (SR) of cancer is an unusual event, but many people will recount stories of someone they knew who had experienced the spontaneous disappearance of cancer. The most commonly accepted criteria for spontaneous regression (SR) of cancer were postulated by Everson and Cole in 1959. By the Everson and Cole definition, it was estimated to be not more than 1 in 60,000 to 100,000 cases. For unknown reasons, it is more frequently reported in renal cell carcinoma or malignant melanoma. There are thousands of cancer patients, who have extended their survival way beyond the upper limits of the median or who are seemingly cured after a terminal prognosis. Several cases of SR have implicated surgery or biopsy conducted on the primary tumor or the metastases as elements that can induce an immunological response. Cole reported that 71 out of 176 cases of SR in cancer were associated with some type of operative trauma. Another term being used to describe a similar occurrence is "radical remission" of cancer and it is also seen in patients who defy the odds. Researchers are interested in what, if anything, these SR patients are doing to heal themselves of incurable diseases or to improve their chances of being cured. Kelly Turner, PhD, has analyzed more than 1000 cases of spontaneous remission and has written a book: *Radical Remission: Surviving Cancer Against All Odds*. Dr. Turner prefers the term "radical remission" because typically there is nothing spontaneous about these unusual cures. Most patients were actively doing something to facilitate healing. Turner identified more than 75 different healing factors that patients used to help heal themselves. Of these, 9 stood out. The patients radically changed their diets, took control of their health, followed their intuition, used herbs and supplements, released suppressed emotions, increased positive emotions, embraced social support, deepened their spiritual connection, and had strong reasons for living.

In the America that I love, there is always hope.

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