

Prevention of Cancer

Editorial

Eating, be it noted, benefits the whole body. Assuredly, the cells, which are the body's building materials, must be fed. In turn, the fed cells must perform their duties. Unfortunately, if they misbehave, disease results. This is particularly true of cancer - man's Number 1 enemy. Indeed, it is a frightening disease.

Disease of that magnitude needs some explanation. Cancer cells are the body's revoltiifg cells. They grow out of hand. They destroy their point of origin. Then, they overwhelm other parts near and far. Finally, death occurs. Accordingly, such man's misfortune demands a serious search for haw to maintain normalcy. In fact, going by first principles, such a search must be directed towards prevention.

Prevention of canter is in consequence man's subsuming subject.

Subject yourself to blazing sunlight, if you please. That is a simple thing if your skin is dark. It is quite another thing if you are an albino - "anyali" in Igbo language. Thus, when you see an albino going about under the blazing sun, note that the face will be reddish and spotted. Then realize that each such spot is the prelude to cancer! This is what my researches [1,2] have illustrated. In point of fact, I have had a female albino medical student. She is nawa, coppinft tihy*iam, *-has unblemished skin. Her solution was proper clothing couple 'With' mostly unclear activities. In effect, albinos need not suffer the cancerous calamity which my good friend, Professor Anezi Okoro [3], described and been denouncing. In truth albinos, should wear wide-brim hats and long-sleeved clothes. They should work indoors. They should take any other steps which would ensure 100% prevention.

Prevention has traditionally been assured by our local custom of male circumcision. As I showed [4], if an Igbo ever has penis cancer, it is usually found not at the tip but along the shaft - just like cancer formed by chance in any other, skin area.

Area which is worse affected by cancer in our community is the leg. It starts as a chronic ulcer. Then, cancer develops there. Because of its commonness in particular parts of the world, it has been called "tropical ulcer." When plastic surgeons operate on such ulcers, as my coauthors do [5], they cover them with what is called skin graft. In this way, cancer formation is readily prevented.

Prevented to a large extent also is lung cancer when smoking is stopped. I remember how my own mentor, Prof DF Cappell, used to tell us how he. Stopped that horrible behavior. Indeed, his counterpart's had done the same thing thus [6].

After the early reports on smoking and lung cancer, the British physicians cut down their smoking. Many of them stopped,

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smoking entirely. Within a relatively short time period of between five to eight years the rates of lung cancer for British physicians had fallen, while the rates for males in general in Great Britain had increased, we are not quite so wise and we don't really know what has 'gone on, although cancer rates have changed.

Changed for the better, centuries ago, was the old British practice, of sending little boys up the chimneys in order to clean them [7]. They developed scrotum cancer as adolescents. Called chimney-sweepers' cancer, it was prevented with wise legislation.

Legislation 'is not needed as regards cancer of the neck of the womb. It is called carcinoma of the cervix. A major cause of it childbirth, This is because that outlet area is torn during the passage of the child's head. Hence, as I found out [8], this cancer is commoner in Igbo women who have had six or more children. Therefore, without being told, lowering the number of childbirths would lower the occurrence of this cancer. Also research has shown that this cancer is increased by 'early sexual intercourse and having many sexual partners [6]. Consequently, as the Bible has it [9], and, -if I may dare to mention the husband who: have ears to hear, let him hear."Hear also what I preached in my Textbook [10].

People of sub-Saharan Africa consume groundnuts damaged by fungi, thereby ingesting a toxin called aflatoxin. It is a known trigger of liver cancer. People are therefore advised to wash such nuts carefully.

Carefully researched as regards liver cancer is 'the role of alcohol in its causation [11]. Needless to say, moderate consumption is allowable together with adequate intake of cereals, vegetables, and fruits. These nutrients are nicely in keeping with modern teachings [12] in the field of nutrition.

Nutrition workers and others must emphasize the ills of overweight, i.e., obesity, in this connection, diet is being suspected' in the causation of breast cancer [6]. Certainly, the surgically

removed specimens of breast, cancer sent to me to examine are, often rather fatty. More specifically, fat women are prone to gall bladder disease in which stones are formed in that organ [13]: In turn, these stones lead to cancer [10], through their rubbing incessantly on the innermost cells of this vital organ.

Organ of note in terms of what is called screening is the cervix. The part I have been playing in this investigation in Enugu led to my, being given, in 2002, the "Selfless Service Award" by the Branch's 4edical Women Association of Nigeria. The work itself has been written up [14]. In essence, simple examination of materials obtained expertly from that organ is used to search for the presence of early suspicious changes. Elsewhere [15], their follow-ups were shown to massively reduce the development of this cancer, especially in advanced, countries.

Countries all over the world are experiencing a deluge of cases of HIV-AIDS. Therefore, in terms of the prevention of cancer, which often accompanies it [16], the real recourse is to sexual restraint. This cannot but be promoted if all of us hearken to Christ's admonition of the woman, caught in the very act of adultery, namely [17] "Go and sin no more."

More, if I may continue a little longer, must be said. I refer to the role of the mind in cancer prevention [18]. Of course, what is scientifically called the immune system of the body is helpful. It is thought, for instance, that there even appears to be a natural mechanism capable of destroying cancer cells. Be that as it may, let the individual through prayers and other spiritual modes of lifelleternine to fight cancer.

Cancer prevention, in conclusion, requires education. As my fellow Professor of Pathology, who was, working at the University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, observed, "Education is preventive in itself" [19]. My talk today should be educative. It is about misbehaving cells manifesting as cancer. It is not about evil spirits or evil men being behind cancer! Therefore, I would like to end this much shortened address by agreeing with another fellow scientist, this time from America. As the man emphasized [20], Prevention of disease is one of the most powerful motivations for improving the environment; and among the growing roster of environmental diseases, one is beginning to emerge as predominant: cancer.

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