Unproven Methods of Cancer Management: Cancer Quackery

Annually, over a half million people in the United States develop cancer. At the present time, only one in three is cured through the use of accepted methods of cancer management which include surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. The other two that are not cured are prone to exploitation by quacks who use worthless tests and treatments. This makes cancer quackery a big business. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has estimated that the public spends in excess of two billion dollars yearly on worthless cancer tests and treatments. Besides this economic toll, the loss of lives due to delay in early diagnosis and the institution of proper treatment cannot possibly be estimated.

Cancer quackery dates back to the very beginning of our country. In 1748, General George Washington rewarded, and publicly commended, a Mrs. Johnson for her recipe to cure cancer using a mixture of garden sorrel, celandine, per-simmon bark and spring water.

Unproven methods of cancer management cover a wide range of materials, methodology and rationale. Among the simpler ones are escharotics (corrosive or caustic agents), used to treat external cancer, natural products, such as cobwebs saturated with arsenic powder applied as a poultice to “draw-out” the cancer, clover blossom tea and raw food diets, such as the “grape cure.” Claims are made that cancer is caused by an imbalance in the body and that it may be cured by getting rid of impurities (detoxification) and strictly adhering to a dietary regime such as the Gerson and Hoxsey methods of treatment. Worthless devices to diagnose and treat cancer range from a small wooden box with nothing inside except a colored light bulb to the Drown Instrument Device developed by a chiropractor who claimed that she could diagnose illness from a drop of the patient’s blood. After analyzing a sample obtained from a healthy young doctor the chiropractor claimed: “this person has cancer, abnormal blood pressure and a very poor chance to recover.” Biological products, prepared from pooled cancer tissue from animals or the patient’s own blood and/or urine have been proposed. Through the years, hundreds of worthless cancer “drugs” have been promoted as cures. While the drug, device or dietary method may actually be harmless, precious time is lost while the cancer patient is undergoing treatment or testing with these worthless methods, thus delaying treatment because of misdiagnosis or forfeiting his chance for cure or prolongation of life.
Proponents of Unproven Methods

Proponents of worthless cancer tests and "cures" range from the ignorant, uneducated, misguided person, to the highly educated scientist with advanced degrees who is out of his field of competence. They may falsely assume the title "Doctor" and display a variety of elaborately framed degrees often obtained from correspondence schools such as N.D. (Doctor of Naturopathy), Ph. N. (Philosopher of Naturopathy) or Ms. D. (Doctor of Metaphysics). The quack is not easily recognized by the lay person. These individuals usually present a very professional facade appearing in a white jacket and using pseudo-scientific terms, thereby impressing prospective patients. They exude warmth, friendliness, enthusiasm, concern and assure the patient that his "cancer" can be cured with the treatment being offered.

Quacks tend to be isolated from established scientific facilities and associations . . . they do not use regular channels of communication for scientific reporting, relying instead on publication in the free press and lay journals. Usually, they offer a "secret cure" many times bearing their own name. They claim persecution by the medical profession . . . refuse consultation with qualified physicians . . . maintain scanty records or none at all. Quacks rely on testimonials of people they have supposedly "cured." Often these patients have undergone conventional therapy with surgery, radiation or chemotherapy prior to being treated by the quack. Many of these people do not have biopsy proof of their disease and, in fact, never had cancer.

Why do people go to quacks? Unfortunately, in sheer desperation, patients will leave the care of competent doctors and place themselves in the hands of quacks.

Ignorance, more than any other factor, drives patients to quacks. Fear of cancer is universal among the uninformed. Once having been told they have cancer, they fear they are doomed, believing that all cancers are incurable. They fear the surgeon's knife . . . disfigurement . . . radiation therapy . . . toxic drugs. They fear the social stigma associated with the word, "cancer." In general, the more knowledge the individual has about cancer, the less vulnerable he is to cancer quackery.

One of the most tragic incidents on record involving quack treatment of a cancer patient was that of Linda Epping, an eight-year-old child.

In 1961, Mr. and Mrs. Epping met a woman in the waiting room of the University of California Medical Center in Los Angeles where they had taken their daughter for treatment to remove a cancerous growth involving one of her eyes. Doctors at the hospital were convinced they could save the child's life by removing the affected eye.

This woman spoke with the Eppings and told them how a chiropractor allegedly cured her son of brain cancer without surgery. Fearing the planned surgery, and filled with new hope, the parents removed the child from the hospital and placed her under the care of the chiropractor, Marvin Phillips. Phillips treated her with vitamins, massive amounts of unidentified pills, enemas and special exercises. The cancerous tumor continued to grow; the parents, too late, realized the worthlessness of this treatment and brought the child back to the hospital in California where she soon died. Doctors at the University of California Medical Center, following the autopsy report, stated that the child's life probably could have been saved or at least significantly prolonged if the parents had permitted the original planned surgical approach to remove the cancerous growth.

The chiropractor, Marvin Phillips, was tried, convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to jail in the state of California.
Promotion of Unproven Methods

A great deal of information concerning alleged cancer prevention, detection, treatment and "cures" reaches the public through the activities (for instance, meetings, conventions, lectures, publications, movies, etc.) of various "health" organizations who oppose what they call the "medical monopoly."

The International Association of Cancer Victims and Friends, Inc.

The International Association of Cancer Victims and Friends, Inc. was founded in 1963 by Cecile Hoffman, a cancer victim who claimed her life had been saved by the use of an unproven remedy called Laetrile. Cecile Hoffman died in 1969 from metastatic cancer. This organization, originally active in California, now has many local chapters throughout the country with thousands of members.

The Association holds annual meetings and conventions both on the East and West Coasts to promote unproven methods of cancer management and freedom of choice in cancer therapy for the cancer patient.

The Cancer Control Society

The Cancer Control Society was formed in Los Angeles in 1973 by dissident members of the I. A. C. V. F. after disputes over major policy and the disposition of the proceeds of book sales. The new group favors aggressive legislative and court action against government restrictions on unproven remedies of every kind. It is working toward national organization.

The Committee for Freedom of Choice in Cancer Therapy, Inc.

The Committee for Freedom of Choice in Cancer Therapy, Inc. was founded in Los Altos, California in 1972. This group was able to establish large numbers of local chapters in all parts of the nation within a matter of months. Its interests appear to be political rather than medical, with emphasis on constitutional rights and freedoms. Nevertheless, persons affiliated with this Committee appear also to be closely linked to "underground railroads," which provide access to those dispersing unproven remedies, and sources of distribution for unorthodox preparations. Some bookshops associated with the John Birch Society have served as meeting places for the Committee and as sources of literature about unorthodox cancer treatments. The Committee for Freedom of Choice in Cancer Therapy has made wide distribution of a one-hour film called, "World Without Cancer." There is also a book of the same name.

The National Health Federation

The National Health Federation, with a reported list of more than 40,000 members and friends, has its headquarters in California.

The Federation maintains an office in Washington, D.C. where its legal counsel and lobbyist "study all proposed bills relating to health." Representatives testify at legislative committee hearings and propose bills and amendments including "suppression of cancer cures."

The Mass Media

An important factor in the promotion of unproven methods of cancer management is the advantage taken of our free press making it possible for hundreds of books, newspapers and magazine articles to present false, but favorable, information dealing with worthless cancer tests and remedies.

In addition to the sporadic articles in mass circulation magazines, there are a variety of so-called "health" magazines which are especially interested in unproven treatment regimes, publishing articles dealing with the latest "theories" and "advances" for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure of cancer. Examples of these are the Herald of Health and Prevention magazines with a
circulation of over 1,203,635. Sensational mass circulation newspapers such as the National Tattler and the Enquirer often carry articles concerning unproven methods of cancer management.

Books, especially if they are on so-called controversial medical problems opposing conventional therapy offered by the medical profession, are quite appealing to the public. Many of these books are well written so that the reader may get the impression that such a book is a factual summary of information, when in reality it is not. Some examples are: Has Doctor Max Gerson a True Cancer Cure?; Laetrile: Control for Cancer; The Incredible Story of Krebiozen: A Matter of Life and Death; Vitamin B17: Forbidden Weapon Against Cancer; and World Without Cancer.

Proponent organizations of unproven methods of cancer management and freedom of choice of therapy for cancer victims publish their own magazines and bulletins. Examples of these are: The National Health Federation Bulletin, the house organ of the National Health Federation; the Cancer News Journal published by the International Association of Cancer Victims and Friends, Inc.; the Cancer Control Journal published by the Cancer Control Society; and the March of Truth on Cancer.

Entertainers, socially prominent persons, celebrities and others in the public eye are often called upon to promote various unproven methods of cancer management. These people do not have the scientific training or background to be able to judge the merit of the methods they are promoting since they do not understand the strict criteria for scientific investigation necessary before a drug or method of treatment is acceptable for medical use.

Control of Unproven Methods

The American Cancer Society, American Medical Association, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, National Cancer Institute, U.S. Postal Service and investigators at leading cancer research centers across the country are involved in either the investigation, regulation or reporting on unproven methods of cancer management.

The American Cancer Society

In 1955, the American Cancer Society began a program on unproven methods of cancer management to help combat cancer quackery. At that time there was little factual information concerning worthless cancer tests and remedies, and no state legislation to control the use of these quack methods.

Thus, the National Office of the American Cancer Society established an information center which has developed into a master reference center for the collection and distribution of material dealing with all aspects of unproven methods of cancer management. This is the principal repository of such information in the world. Articles of interest on unproven methods are also published in this journal which is distributed to more than 360,000 physicians and medical students throughout the nation.

Reprints of articles are widely used by the Society to answer inquiries from the medical profession as well as the public. Material is also made available to reporters, editors, science writers, program directors and others in checking the validity of claims made for cancer tests and remedies.

To encourage the use of legislation to control quackery, the Society formulated a State Model Cancer Act which has been instrumental in the enactment of anti-quackery laws now enforced in nine states.

The American Medical Association

The American Medical Association's Department of Investigation, an educational activity of the A.M.A., has since 1906, maintained extensive files on all aspects of unproven methods of cancer management, as well as cultism, fad-
disim, impostors and pseudo-medicine. It actively cooperates with other agencies in the investigation of worthless cancer tests and remedies.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration

In cooperation with other agencies, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration conducts investigations into claims made for unproven methods of cancer management. If warranted, facts are reported to the Department of Justice with recommendation for seizure and initiation of criminal prosecution or injunction action in the Federal courts whenever worthless cancer diagnostic or treatment devices or remedies are known to have been shipped across state lines.

Approval for the marketing of all cancer drugs sold in the United States comes under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration. Strict standards of investigation must be met before any new cancer drug can be approved for use by the medical profession.

Before a new cancer drug can be tested on humans, the sponsor must apply to the FDA for a “Notice of Claimed Investigational Exemption for a New Drug.” This application must contain the complete composition of the drug, its source, how it is made and results of all animal studies to document that enough testing has been conducted and that the drug shows promise of being useful in humans. Once an Investigational New Drug Application has been approved, the following studies are undertaken:

Phase I Studies: The first phase of human testing is directed at determining what chemical actions a drug has, how it is absorbed by the body, how it should be administered and what the safe dosage range is. Phase I Studies usually involve less than 10 patients.

Phase II Studies: These are concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of the drug and involve testing of a limited number of patients for treatment or prevention of a specific disease.

Phase III Studies: In Phase III the most extensive testing is conducted involving thousands of patients to assess the drug’s safety, effectiveness and most desirable dosage in treating a specific disease in a large number of patients. In Phase III Studies, the drug is used the way it would be administered when marketed.

Following completion of Phase III Studies to indicate that the drug is effective and safe, the sponsor then submits a New Drug Application which must contain the chemical structure of the drug, scientific rationale, purpose of the drug, as well as results of all animal and human testing. The application is now reviewed for final approval to market a new drug by one of the Divisions of the FDA which is composed of physicians, pharmacists, chemists and other professionals experienced in evaluating new drugs.

By the time a new drug is marketed for use by the medical profession, thorough testing has been conducted both in animals and humans under carefully controlled circumstances, usually involving thousands of patients.

The National Cancer Institute

The National Cancer Institute is a part of the U.S. Public Health Service, under the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

At the request of proponents or other interested agencies or individuals, the NCI will conduct investigations into new cancer remedies. Through its Cancer Chemotherapy National Service Center, arrangements are made for the testing of new chemicals as anti-cancer agents.

The U.S. Postal Service

The Fraud Division of the U.S. Postal Service actively engages in the investigation of worthless cancer tests and remi-
edies promoted through the mails. These investigations have resulted in the conviction and sentencing of quacks who use the mails to defraud the public.

**What Still Can be Done to Control Unproven Methods**

More effective control of cancer quackery can be accomplished through the following means:

- By the enactment of more state anti-quackery laws. California, in 1959, was the first state to enact model legislation to control cancer quackery. Presently, purveyors of unproven remedies in the state of California are subject to a possible felony conviction. Other states with legislation making the use of unproven methods a criminal offense include Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio and Pennsylvania. No other states have control over the use or distribution of useless cancer tests and "drugs."

- By the formation of state cancer commissions and cancer advisory councils to investigate exaggerated and unfounded claims for quack methods of diagnosing and treating cancer, and by initiating action, under state anti-quackery laws, to halt the promotion and sale of these worthless methods.

- By programs of public education to alert the public that cancer can be treated with proven methods and that by accepting proven tests to detect the onset of cancer at the earliest stage, and by seeking appropriate treatment quickly, patients can afford themselves the best opportunity for cure.

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**Correction**

In the fourth edition of "Clinical Oncology for Medical Students and Physicians—A Multidisciplinary Approach" prepared by the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Rochester, New York and published by the American Cancer Society, please note an error in the dosage of the MOPP chemotherapy regimen for Hodgkin's disease on page 433. The correct dosage of nitrogen mustard is: 6 mg/m² i.V. on day one and day eight, and *not* 6 mg/m² i.V. on day one through day eight.