Reporting on

Cancer Research

Commentary on the
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The July and August issues of Cancer Research include supplements that should be required reading for all physicians who deal with patients who have cancer, as well as for any citizens concerned about medical care and the national fiscal allocations for the fight against cancer.

July

Nutrition and Cancer Therapy
Gio Gori (National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland), co-chairman of the Conference and the program officer for the area, notes in his summation that this is the first time that a formal assembly has been held on the role of nutrition in the therapy and rehabilitation of the cancer patient.

Effects of Cancer on Nutritional Status
The first session dealt with the general effects of cancer on nutritional status. Anorexia and cachexia are well-known consequences of cancer, as they are of many other chronic, progressive diseases. Several speakers wanted better measurements by total body caloriometers and isotope dilution technics. They emphasized that anorexia-cachexia probably has no single cause but represents a constellation of neural, gastrointestinal and humoral factors. There was agreement that the production of toxic substances by tumors was an unlikely complication.

Nutritional Consequences of Therapy
The second session focused on the nutritional consequences of therapy. The modern, aggressive therapeutic approaches to the patient with cancer—surgical, radiological or chemical—produce nutritional sequelae as threatening as the diseases themselves. There was agreement that pre-therapy nutritional support is preferable to intensive post-therapy care. The need for developing measurements of nutritional status that could more precisely assess individual needs was also pointed out.

Management of the Adult and Child with Cancer
The third session tackled the subject of actual nutritional management of the adult and the child with cancer. It should be recalled that the recently resurrected programmatic development of nutrition and cancer was initiated by the Candlelighters, mothers of children with leukemia who asked Congress for help in the problem of feeding their children. The final session touched upon the role of anxiety in the genesis of anorexia and noted the importance of food selection and variation.

Total Parenteral Nutrition
One of the significant advances in nutritional support has been the development of total parenteral nutrition.
TPN). Such hyperalimentation via the vena cava provides essential support that is reflected in reduced mortality during and after acute therapy and early rehabilitation. But the problem of nutritional preferences, especially among children, remains. In fact, with the better control of sepsis in children receiving aggressive therapeutic treatment, malnutrition is now a leading cause of pediatric cancer fatalities.

Lost in the complexity of the scientific work now being done is the simple fact that for man food is more than the sum of its chemical constituents. Many intangibles—decor, pleasant surroundings, a touch of grace—come into play and are sorely lacking in the standard hospital fare. Compounding the problem is the paucity of knowledge among physicians in general regarding nutrition. The situation is one where much work and support are sorely needed.

**August**

National Bladder Cancer Conference
Gilbert H. Friedell (St. Vincent Hospital, Worcester, Massachusetts), director of this national organ site program, presents an overview of the project and of the conference objectives.

**Organ-Targeted Cancer Programs**

During the 1950s, the American Cancer Society oriented a portion of its program along site rather than discipline, choosing lung cancer as its point of emphasis. Such organ-targeted orientation was also followed during the 1960s by the Breast Cancer Task Force of the National Cancer Institute. Subsequently, four similar programs were effected under the expanded National Cancer Plan of 1971, one of which was on bladder cancer.

**A Multidisciplinary Approach**

The National Bladder Cancer Project represents an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the human bladder cancer problem. It includes the search for: (1) causes of the development of cancer; (2) techniques for its detection and diagnosis; and (3) methods of treatment and rehabilitation. Varied specialists—involving the most basic and the most applied of the scientific disciplines—are taking part in the work.

**Promising Methods of Prevention**

The program consisted of 42 separate papers, divided into five sessions. The papers summarize our current knowledge, and the poor results in the management of patients diagnosed with advanced disease. At present, the best way to reduce the ravages of bladder cancer is to more rigorously define the environmental exposures connected with its etiology, and to increase our capability to intervene effectively at earlier stages of the disease. Increasing industrial and environmental surveillance remains the most promising method of prevention; cytological studies and selected mucosal biopsies appear to be the best means for earlier diagnosis.

The orientation of the campaign against cancer by organ site is a potentially fruitful approach to the problem at hand and the bladder cancer project is a fine example of some of the better features of this approach.