

Preface

by Warren Bell

Let me tell you why this book is important and valuable.

When I completed my family medicine residency at McGill in 1976, there was a final exam. It included interviews with simulated patients. One such person was a woman in her fifties who, I was told, had just been confirmed to have terminal cancer. It was my task to tell her this fact.

It was an emotional encounter. I had already completed an elective in palliative care, and was not at all uncomfortable talking about death. But the woman — even though she was simply an actress playing a role — somehow connected deeply to the experience of having cancer and being close to death. Afterwards, she wept, and told me about the overwhelmingly sense of loss she had felt while we were speaking.

Over the decades, I have had many encounters with people with terminal cancer. Death is not the problem — every dawn is followed by a sunset. But premature, preventable disease and death — that’s another matter. When I meet someone sick with a cancer that could clearly have been prevented, I feel a sense of disquiet, and even frustration. In particular, I am deeply concerned about the rising toll of cancer that comes from *involuntary* exposures to carcinogens.

While many cancers are caused by personal behaviours (e.g. smoking) or “bad genes” (about 5% of breast and bowel cancer), there are a rapidly growing number that are caused by man-made contaminants in the environment. Exposure to them is leading to steadily rising cancer rates, especially in children.

And that’s why this book is important and valuable.

The authors of *Cancer: 101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic* have taken up where most doctors, public health officials, scientists, businesspeople and regulators have left off. They have assembled and digested a vast array of information from a wide variety of sources, and turned it into a “handbook” for arresting the tide of unnecessary, premature death from exposure to the carcinogens we still produce in untold quantities. They have laid out, for every reader, a series of practical steps to prevent exposure, reduce risk, and ultimately restore Planet Earth.

In this well-organized volume, you will find a road map out of the morass of what oncologist Karl-Henrik Robert, founder of **The Natural Step**, has called “molecular garbage”.

This book is wonderful tool for enhancing your own health – and the health of our planetary home.

— Dr. Warren Bell, M.D.
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and Active Staff member,
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foreword

by Devra Davis

I'm a cancer orphan. Both my parents died from the disease that now affects almost one out of every two men and more than one in every three women in North America today.

I know what cancer looks and feels like. I have also come to know that much of the disease could have been prevented, if only we had paid attention to what some people have been warning for years.

In this book, Liz Armstrong, Guy Dauncey and Anne Wordsworth turn the dominant paradigm about cancer upside down. In North America, for years, the debate on the environmental causes of cancer has been whether there is sufficient proof to declare that any given substance causes our cancers. Risks are generally assessed one substance at a time, and only a small percentage of the hazardous substances that are part and parcel of our daily lives are tested. Obscure models using animals exposed to these substances are used to estimate their likely impact on humans.

The authors show us that this approach has not worked. They confirm the tragic and continuing saga of individuals, workers and communities whose continuing exposure to the risks of cancer has endangered their lives and those of their families, and killed far too many humans — and other living creatures.

The world is changing, and Canadians are at the center in two major roles. Prompted by engaged citizens, the provincial governments of Alberta, Quebec and Ontario have begun efforts to get rid of cancerous agents, and businesses are emerging to create greener, more efficient and less polluting products of all kinds.

The Canadian Cancer Society has spoken out against the use of 'cosmetic' pesticides and adopted the precautionary principle. California has produced a major report on Green Chemistry, linking the health impacts of toxic chemicals to the urgent need to develop a new approach.

Massachusetts has shown the way with toxics use reduction legislation that has helped hundreds of companies not just to clean up their act, but to prosper financially. Sweden has made a commitment to phase out all hazardous chemicals by 2020. President Jacques Chirac has called for candidates for the French national presidency to make public declarations of their intent to reduce the environmental burden on cancer.

This book sends an urgent wake-up call. It exposes some troubling episodes in public health where people have been denied the fundamental human right to know about the dangers that exist in their everyday world, and it provides copious evidence of policies, practices and principles that offer us the possibility of a far safer, healthier world, if we are willing to embrace them.

Some may be challenged by the passion of this book. Some may be uncomfortable with its tone, but no one can dispute the solid grounds on which it rests.

— Devra Davis, Ph.D., MPH

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Author of *When Smoke Ran Like Water* (Basic Books, 2002) and *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* (Basic Books, Fall 2007).