I am a cancer survivor. You may be one too. Chances are you at least know someone who has cancer, and you also know that when you get the diagnosis, you've got a lot of questions. What you need are answers, but few doctors have the time to provide them, assuming they even follow the latest research.

Cancer happens fast: two weeks after diagnosis, I was in surgery; two weeks after surgery, I was scheduled to begin chemotherapy and radiation. In just one month, I was expected to make the most important health decisions of my life on an illness that I never expected to have.

Enter Ralph Moss Ph.D.

Dr. Moss is an internationally known medical writer with 11 books and three documentaries to his credit. His specialty is cancer and its treatment. A former assistant director of public affairs at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, Dr. Moss independently evaluates the claims of many cancer treatments, both conventional and unconventional. He also visits clinics that specialize in the treatment of cancer. As director of The Moss Reports, he makes this information available to consumers in simple, elegant and well-researched prose. To date, there are Moss Reports on more than 200 types of cancer. The Moss Reports, which may number more than 400 pages each, give cancer patients and their families the information they most need to know: What's the research on the cancer treatments my doctor is recommending? What are the side effects? Are there alternatives? Are these alternatives effective? As a cancer patient, what should I eat? What supplements are most necessary? Where can I find a clinic that offers alternative cancer treatments? These and so many more questions are answered in The Moss Reports.

Cancer has surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death in America. It is a disease that most of us will either have or we will lose someone who has it. At Dr. Moss' website cancerdecisions.com, you can get the answers you need quickly, and with research you can trust. I recommend you visit the website today and sign up for a free weekly newsletter.

Dr. Moss was kind enough to grant Organica an interview.

What exactly is cancer?

There's the standard definition, that cancer consists of 100 to 200 different diseases, tissue-specific, organ-specific diseases, broken down into different types as they appear. Each one is treated differently. Many scientists would say that cancer is a mutation of DNA that takes place as a result of either an inherited defect, or as an assault from environment, i.e., something in the diet, air, water, workplace, etc. This standard definition does not assign any root cause to cancer.

However, I think that a new paradigm is shaping up in the cancer field. That paradigm is that many cancers—it could be many, most, or all, even—are caused by changes to stem cells that are present in many parts of the body. As I am sure you know, stem cells are the hottest research topic right now—both in biology and in politics—but very few people in the debate over the stem cell revolution understand the implications as they pertain to cancer. Stem cells are not a treatment for cancer, though human ingenuity may come up with something along those lines. In fact, if stem cells are injected into a person, they would cause cancer (see teratoma in Scientific American, July 2005).

How do stem cells relate to this new paradigm of cancer?

In the 1990s some basic research established that if you take cells from a breast cancer and then try to grow a cancer in a mouse—this is standard operating procedure—fewer than one in 100 of those cells would be capable of growing a new cancer. While originally done at the University of Toronto, Michael Clarke and Mohammed Al-Hajj at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor also showed this to be true. This work has now been extended to a wide variety of cancers, including brain cancer. The University of Michigan has put $12 million towards this research, and Harvard, University of Toronto and the University of California are supporting this as well.

While this work is no secret, the implications have not yet hit home. When the tumor cells are separated and analyzed, the malignant seed cell has markers on its surface but lacks certain others present on the other cells. The pattern of these cell surface markers on the malignant seed cell is similar to that presented by the trophoblastic cells during pregnancy. In a pregnancy, there are the cells that are going to become the person. Around those cells, there is a ball, and the outer cells of the ball become the placenta. These trophoblastic cells are unique in biology, and very interesting. [Editor's note: Trophoblastic cells are very important in the early development of the embryo and fetus. They provide nutrients and oxygen from the mother to the fetus and participate in the formation of the placenta.] They are invasive—once they brush against the uterus, they grab on and burrow into and spread. They are corrosive and metastatic. This is a very simple way to explain the abundance of cancer, which was first described in 1892 by John Beard, a Scottish professor of embryology in Edinburgh, in an article in The Lancet. After 100 years—and a long checkered history—scientists at major universities are publishing they have found cancer cells with markers on their surfaces characteristic of trophoblastic cells. Cancer is so similar to trophoblasts that they could be considered the same.

A professor of gastroenterology at the University of Western Massachusetts, Jean Houghton, performed a very elegant experiment that shows the activity of stem cells in the development of cancer. She and her team removed the bone marrow from mice and injected them with a new bone marrow that stains blue. They then irritated the stomachs of the mice by infecting them with the animal strain of H. pylori (implicated as the cause of stomach cancer). A great many of the animals developed early stages of stomach cancer. They were then injected with stain and dissected. All of the cancers turned blue, meaning that the cancers came from the new bone marrow. What happened, according to Dr. Houghton, is that the local immune system could not deal with the infection, so that the stem cells came from the bone marrow to the stomach. These were the cells that were transformed by the infection into cancer. It is as if your own army had gone against you. I am sure this is a very big piece of the puzzle. From Clark, et al., we now know that cancer is essentially a stem cell of trophoblastic nature, and that it is probably derived not from the target organ but from the bone marrow. Scientific investigation is getting so much closer to a solution to the cause of cancer.

Books by Dr. Ralph Moss

Available from Equinox Press:


Antioxidants Against Cancer (2000).

www.organicanews.com
The data is very clear. The folks who eat an unprocessed diet, have less cancer. It’s difficult, however, to tease out the components that make this diet better. Foods that show particular benefit are those high in antioxidants, such as berries. My two granddaughters are here. They’re eight and seven, and they’ve just brought me a big bowl of raspberries out of the garden. You just can’t beat that. The data shows that there’s a correlation between those kinds of foods and lowering of cancer. You can see the differing levels of cancer in countries, between those with a high intake of natural foods and those with a fast food philosophy. Sixty percent of cancer can be traced to diet.

What about sunlight?

Despite what dermatologists say, sunlight is highly protective against cancer. Sunlight produces vitamin D in the skin, as well as other factors, and vitamin D is protective against cancer. Too much sunlight can produce superficial skin cancers, which are a danger. Sunlight is bad in high quantities; it’s important not to burn, but a moderate amount of sun is beneficial. You need only 15 minutes morning and afternoon in the winter. Today’s dermatologists have zero tolerance for sunlight. Future generations will see quack prescriptions like in the era of bleeding and leeches. It’s crazy.

What role does the consumption of dietary fat have in the possibility of developing cancer?

Very rancid fats and transfats definitely play a role. I personally stick to olive oil. Canola oil is questionable in my view. Last year I brought back some grape seed oil from Germany—you can still smell the grapes.

What about coconut oil?

I haven’t investigated it per se, but nut oils are good. Monosaturated oils are very good for you. Eating nuts correlates with fewer heart attacks and greater longevity.

Saturated fat in meat and dairy products has been implicated as a cause of cancer. Is this perhaps due to chemicals dissolved in the fat, rather than the fat itself?

Yes. What’s done to beef and dairy is very harmful. I do eat some organic, locally raised beef. I’m very lucky where I live, because there’s a cornucopia of locally raised food. We have our pick here. Try to establish your own pipelines.

Is raw milk healthier?

It’s six of one and half dozen of the other. If you know the dairy is clean, and they take care of their animals, raw milk may be better, though not in immune-compromised people. For the average person, I think raw milk is probably a good choice. Non-homogenized milk is a better choice too: the act of homogenization disperses the fat through the milk, which may make the particles too small and may contribute to heart disease.

Is cancer a modern disease?

I do believe it’s a disease of civilization. I wrote some newsletters a couple of years ago about this: the history of cancer and how it developed in modern times. The increase of cancer is about pollution, and it’s about stress. If you follow the work of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Arctic explorer, there was no cancer among the Eskimos until 1932. Cancer came with the introduction of canned foods. The first case of cancer was in a man who was a cook for an American family. He was eating the same foods they were, and he developed cancer. In China, up until recently, there was very little cancer among people in the countryside. In Japan, where they follow the traditional diet, it’s the same. The problem in these countries is that they’re hell bent on following American ways. Whether it’s diet or the emotional component, cancer is a disease of civilization, though we can’t go back to the past and prove this definitively.