

EARLY RECOGNITION OF CANCER

SEVERAL people have written suggesting there should be regular medical overhauls for cancer detection. This is often advocated. It wouldn't be successful, for doctors haven't the means as yet to recognise warning signs any quicker than informed persons can note early symptoms for themselves. There may be a few exceptions, such as cancer of the womb, where vaginal smears may reveal a growth before the woman is aware of any symptoms. You will have noticed in the daily press that this diagnostic method is to be tried out in the National Hospital for Women at Auckland. By and large, the patient can recognise the probability of a developing cancer—if he knows enough.

Now some of our doctors object to education of the public in the early recognition of cancer. They say it doubles their work, in that neurosthenic folk imagine they have any or all of the early symptoms, and take up consultation time just to be told there is nothing the matter with them. I think the profession should shoulder this burden. What if ninety unnecessary examinations are made to find ten in the early and mostly curable stages? They say, again,

that to be always on the look out for it builds up fear of cancer. Well, one in every seven is going to get cancer, pretty well everybody has had it in the family somewhere, so it is surely better to make people watchful for early symptoms and willing to report them early, than to keep it all in the dark and going on fearing from lack of knowledge. They say, further, that early signs are not always there, and differ so much, that the people will miss time and time again, and not much good will come of information about early symptoms.

To all this, the health educationist replies: "The profession holds that early diagnosis offers the most hope for successful treatment and that patient delay in not seeking advice when symptoms are first noticed reduces the chance of cures. It is true there are cancers that will be missed because they will be far advanced before symptoms appear, and others for which little can be done because they grow so rapidly after symptoms do show up. But there are certain places where symptoms appear early and where cures are possible. Tell people about that. Patients, either from ignorance or fear, delay in reporting these appearances. Increased knowledge of early symptoms and the better chance



This Talk on Health was broadcast recently from ZB, YA, and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

of cure from early treatment, is surely the only way to banish that irrational fear that holds people back."

For delay in reporting does cut the chance of cure of cancers in sites where symptoms appear early. This has been

worked out for cancer of the womb. If there is less than six months' delay 64% of cases will be early, six to twelve months' delay and only 45% will be early; twelve to eighteen months' delay and 32% only will be early, and curable. What are some places where symptoms can be recognised and there is a very favourable chance of cure if treated early? The skin, the lips, the mouth, the windpipe, the prostate in men, the breast and womb in women. In these places something shows up early: lumps, sores, or bleedings, or failure to work properly.

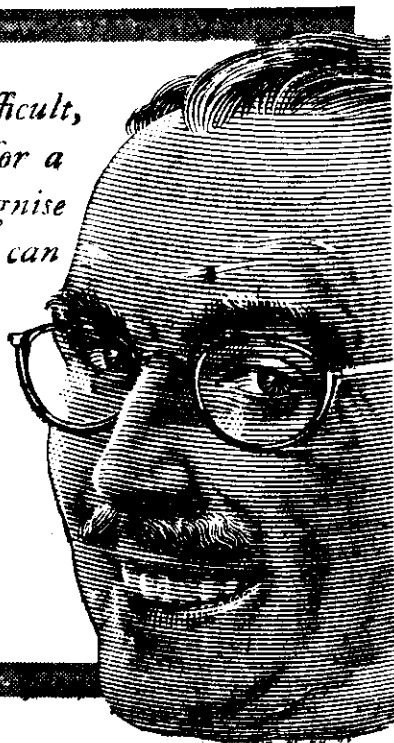
Let us concentrate on a few important signs and reduce deaths from easily treated cancers. These are the signs that should make you seek advice at once: A lump or thickening anywhere in the body, especially in the breast, lips, or tongue. Any unusual bleeding from the vagina or any body opening, or blood in the urine or stools. A sore that doesn't heal, especially on tongue, mouth or lips. Progressive change in the colour or size of a mole, wart, or birthmark. Persistent indigestion. Persistent hoarseness, sore throat, or difficulty in swallowing.

If these signs are recognised early, don't be fearful. In cancer causing these signs present day surgery or radiotherapy or a combination of both, gives good cure rates—provided you take your discovery promptly to your doctor.



*It's not difficult,
you know, for a
non-expert to recognise
an antiseptic you can
trust*

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