

Where Are We This World Cancer Day?



By *Jamie Wells, M.D.* — February 4, 2019



Credit: Pixabay [1]

Today is *World Cancer Day* which means we internationally encourage raising awareness about cancer while promoting and supporting efforts in prevention, early detection and advancement in treatments. There is a lot to celebrate in terms of how far we have come in understanding cancer's shifting paradigm, survival rates and how we are approaching cures and converting many diagnoses into more manageable, chronic diseases.

But, it is also a time to reflect on not permitting [complacency](#) [2] to settle in since there are still countless individuals being diagnosed, living with and dying from especially aggressive forms each year. And, it doesn't help when last week's marketing spectacle of a company's suspect claims of discovering the cure for every type of cancer in a year circle the globe on all media platforms with the most minimal of critical thinking applied. Tacit acceptance of miracle declarations, then offering a megaphone without any analysis or placing into context does society and medical progress a tremendous disservice.

Let's review some crucial articles that tell us where we actually are, what hurdles need to be overcome and what promise the future holds (to read full piece, click on blue link):

- [Company Claims 'Complete Cure For Cancer' In A Year - Cue The Headlines](#) [3] - Despite having yet to save the life of a mouse, last week an Israeli company garnered endless headlines worldwide by making grandiose pronouncements. However, if you look beyond the hype the medical approach is actually pretty interesting.
- [Cancer's Shifting Paradigm](#) [4] - With cancer death rates steadily declining 27% over a quarter century, there is much wonderful news to report. That said, it is important to appreciate that [1,762,450 new cancer cases](#) and [606,880 cancer deaths](#) [5] are expected in

the U.S. this year. While many amazing strides are underway, there are still types of cancer that are aggressive and elude current therapies, for example, and require dedicated attention and considerable efforts for progress to advance. This article puts the situation into relevant context.

- **Top Cancer Researcher: Capital Markets Key In Getting Cures From Lab To Patient** [6] - I recently had the distinct pleasure of hosting the [Independent Women's Forum's](#) [7] Working For Women podcast and interview preeminent cancer researcher and physician scientist [Dr. Richard Pestell](#) [8]. In it, we speak about this shift in our understanding of cancer along with metastatic breast cancer, triple negative breast cancer, what is hopeful on the horizon, why he is excited about his current work and what obstacles are impeding progress in treatments. This is important because with such aggressive diseases especially there should not be any unnecessary lag time getting targeted therapeutics from lab bench to patient bedside (see [here](#) [7], scroll to bottom of accompanying article to listen to podcast). His take home message is that advocates are “essential in driving discoveries to cures” and their involvement is instrumental in the many new improvements we have, so he urges everyone to get involved whether for yourself or a loved one.
- **Are Cancer Drugs Cheaper To Make Than Previously Thought? New Study Claims So.** [9] - Due to the opaque nature of the pharmaceutical industry's disclosures, a study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine (2017)* sought to quantify a standard amount companies spent on the research and development of cancer drugs. Do these R&D costs justify such high prices and revenues? Drug pricing and reducing costs is quite en vogue in 2019, to frame this issue better in reality review this overview [here](#) [10].

Check out these pieces to learn how to embolden resilience, cope with the trauma of a cancer diagnosis and more:

- **Shannen Doherty Reveals Unspoken Truth About A Cancer Diagnosis** [11] - The actress revealed in an online post that she's in remission from breast cancer. She eloquently articulated a very harsh reality for cancer patients about what remission does – and does not – mean.
- **The PTSD Of A Breast Cancer Diagnosis: You And Your Family** [12] - There is a reason on planes when going through safety instructions you are advised to put the oxygen mask on yourself before you can assist anyone else. Debunking the "right" way to cope with a diagnosis is crucial to outcomes.
- **How To Talk To Your Kids About Your Breast Cancer** [13] - Kids are more resilient than you think, but are also magical thinkers. In the absence of direct communication from a parent, they will create their own narrative which can foster greater worry.
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Strategies for Emboldening Resilience Are Worth Your Time ^[14] - Resilience is a tricky thing, routinely not tested until a person experiences extreme circumstances. But, it is a worthy ally; not only throughout a disease's winding path, but also in its influence on positive treatment outcomes.

- **Tanorexia? The Latest Skinny on Melanoma** ^[15] (*Part 1*) - Did you know Bob Marley died of melanoma? Or, that Jimmy Carter was recently "cured" of metastatic melanoma (see *Part 2* [here](#) ^[16])? Many misperceptions abound with respect to skin cancer — specifically melanoma — so they are addressed here in a two-part series. To debunk myths about who is at risk, discuss hot topics in the field and learn what treatments loom on the horizon, I enlisted the help of three leading melanoma researchers from *The Wistar Institute* ^[17] — our nation's first independent biomedical research facility where I am a member of the leadership council.

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Links

[1] <https://pixabay.com/en/cancer-carcinoma-ribbon-syndrome-1455445/>

[2] <https://www.iwf.org/blog/2807699/It%E2%80%99s-Breast-Cancer-Awareness-Month!-Despite-Success,-There-Is-Much-More-Work-To-Be-Done>

[3] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/01/29/company-claims-%E2%80%98complete-cure-cancer%E2%80%99-year-cue-headlines-13763>

[4] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/01/09/cancer%E2%80%99s-shifting-paradigm-13717>

[5] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21551>

[6] <https://www.iwf.org/media/2808344/#153-Top-Cancer-Researcher:-Capital-Markets-Key-in-Getting-Cures-from-Lab-to-Patients>

[7] <http://www.iwf.org/media/2808344/#153-Top-Cancer-Researcher:-Capital-Markets-Key-in-Getting-Cures-from-Lab-to-Patients>

[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Pestell

[9] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/09/13/are-cancer-drugs-cheaper-make-previously-thought-new-study-claims-so-11819>

[10] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/01/08/president-trump-calls-low-drug-prices-media-hypes-pharma%E2%80%99s-recent-increases-13713>

[11] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/05/01/shannen-doherty-reveals-unspoken-truth-about-cancer-diagnosis-11210>

[12] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/11/19/ptsd-breast-cancer-diagnosis-you-and-your-family-13609>

[13] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/11/19/how-talk-your-kids-about-your-breast-cancer-13610>

[14] <https://komenphiladelphia.org/strategies-for-emboldening-resilience-are-worth-your-time/>

[15] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/10/31/tanorexia-latest-skinny-melanoma-10369>

[16] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/11/01/jimmy-carter-cured-metastatic-melanoma-10382>

[17] <https://wistar.org/>