



Newsletter

CANCER CONSULTANTS OF AMERICA

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CANCER AND UNDERSTANDING®

Cancer Answers The History of Cancer

The history of cancer is an interesting topic to explore because cancer has been present in the world before humans walked the earth. Archeologists discovered a bone belonging to a pre-human ancestral relative believed to have lived approximately 1.7 million years ago. The discovered bone was reported to show signs of osteosarcoma, bone cancer. Moving forward along the timeline, it is believed the first written accounts of human cancer date between 3,000 – 2,500 BCE and authored by the Egyptian physician Imhotep. Evidence for this claim comes from a particular scroll on Egyptian papyrus that was discovered around 1862 and is now commonly referred to as the Edwin Papyrus, in recognition of Edwin Smith, an antiquities collector who purchased the document. The Edwin Papyrus is thought to be a copy of the original notes scribed by Imhotep because the hieroglyphics used in the Edwin Papyrus were dated to the days of Imhotep and not at the time of when the Edwin Papyrus was written, approximately 1,600 BCE.

The term “cancer” was first used during the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE (300-400 BCE) to describe abnormal tissue growth. The Greek physician Hippocrates described several forms of abnormal tissue and used the descriptive term *carcinosis* which roughly translates to “crab” due to the shape of the tumor vasculature, when observed in humans. During the start of the new millennium, the Roman medical encyclopedist Celsus, translated Hippocrates Greek term for cancer into the Latin word *cancer* which we commonly use today. Between 100-200 CE, the Greek physician Galen developed the word *oncos* to indicate swelling within the body when describing all types of tumors. However, he reserved the term *carcinosis* when it was believed that malignant tumors (able to cause death) were present within the patient. At that time, advancement of medical science was limited because Greek tradition prohibited the practice of opening the body for investigations. Thus, medical knowledge about cancer was recorded only when overt tumors could be described and documented.

Medical science made significant advancements at the end of the Middle Ages and beginning of the Renaissance period when it was more acceptable to dissect human bodies to learn the cause of death. During this period, medical scientists contributed to our current understanding of cancer. Notably, Percivall Pott, a British surgeon, is credited for describing the first carcinogen (cancer-causing agent) as being coal tar which was identified in chimney soot. It was believed that coal tar served as the main contributor to the development of cancer of the scrotum which was commonly observed among chimney sweepers. At the beginning of the 1900’s oncogenes, cancer-causing genes, and tumor suppressor genes were first described. Soon after, the American Society for the Control of Cancer was founded and would later change their name to the American Cancer Society in the mid-1940’s.

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As technology advanced, a clearer understanding of cancer developed. Moving forward in time, over the past half century, more than 100 cancer-driver genes have been identified as well as genes that suppress the development of cancer. The unique characteristics of cancer became known and therapies were developed to specifically target the cancer cells without harming the healthy cells. Currently, cancer research is using artificial intelligence to design drugs that might engage the molecules within the cancer cells in an effort to eliminate the harmful cells while preserving their healthy counterparts.

The first appearance of cancer predates humans by nearly 1.5 million years and these invisible cellular lifeforms still impact us today. In the more recent 5,000 years, our understanding of the disease started at a sluggish pace. It was only within the last 500 years did our understanding of cancer drastically improve. Now we have the power of artificial intelligence to develop therapies that can be synthesized in the lab and given to a patient who is hopeful that it is the cure for their disease.

This timeline of cancer is likened to an uneven seesaw that is tipped downward toward our present day due to four life-changing letters of the alphabet that could never be offered any time during the history of cancer. These four alphabetical letters have the weight to offset the balance of a history which spans nearly 1.7 million years. Never before in the history of cancer could we offer cancer patients four letters of the alphabet that are now readily available to cancer patients today...HOPE!

Submit your **Cancer Answers** topics to info@CancerConsultantsOfAmerica.com

We Are Available to You

Please contact us today if you would like more information about how our services can benefit you and your family.

Services:

- Individual and Family Cancer Education
- Medical Appointment Liaison Services
- Information Seminars and Public Speaking Events

Fun Facts – February

Cancer Awareness Month:

- Gallbladder and Bile Duct Cancer (Kelly Green) 

February 1 – National Freedom Day 

February 4 – World Cancer Day 

February 9 – National Pizza Day 

February 17 – Mardi Gras 

February 18 – National Drink Wine Day 

February 19 – National Hickey Day 

February 24 – World Bartender Day 

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