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## Foreword

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*Fighting Cancer with Knowledge and Hope* provides you with the information you need to survive cancer. But above everything else, Dr. Frank gives you the wisdom to knock out the despair and depression brought on by cancer. He gives you a needed dose of tranquillity.

Dr. Frank does something very important in this book, and that is to truly demystify cancer. I am not in favor of using that word without an explanation. Demystification evaporates the mystery of cancer, so that you can see clearly and stand courageously wherever you are. Fear disappears, because you finally come to understand the old syllogism: “A human being is mortal. I am a human being. Therefore, I am mortal.”

Being mortal can be a blessing if we believe an old Greek myth. In that story, a man who did not want to die begged the gods to grant him immortality and eternal youth. Tired of his pestering, they gave him his request. He grew old, watched his family die, and saw his friends pass away. The people he loved were gone, leaving him lonely and in despair. He again begged the gods, this time to allow him to die. They agreed, and he died the happiest man on earth.

In James Hilton’s novel *Lost Horizon* (as well as in the film starring

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Ronald Coleman) the strangers who landed in the Himalayan valley of Shangri-La became bored with eternal youth. They escaped and thus completed their destiny as human beings to become old and die.

Cancer is the hands of the gods, reminding us that we are mortal. Dr. Frank's book is the kind hand of a brilliant oncologist who lets you know that it is not yet your time to die, that you can still enjoy your old age, that you can still live without pain, that when you have to go, you can go painlessly, leaving your loved ones in peace, having completed many unfinished projects and business.

Ironically, cancer cells don't want to die; they want to be immortal. They want to obliterate human destiny and to reproduce endlessly by the billions. When the bells strike the final hour for their human host, they all die as the body enters into the kingdom of not-this-world, into the kingdom of eternal peace, the kingdom of a dream without nightmares.

The great Peruvian poet César Vallejo wrote, "After all, one is half-dead, and half-alive, in this life." This is probably true; however, cancer can save you from this human condition and show you a good side effect. It makes you shout, "After all, I am still alive!" And then, knowing you may die, you start living intensely. If you are a good person, you become a better person. If you are not good, you become good. Your life instinct becomes sharp as a knife. Dr. Frank shows the enormous energy spent by the human body in fighting cancer for twenty, thirty, or more years. This concentrated life force, like a huge army, works to defeat cancer for a few or many years of life, with the help of surgery, radiation therapy, and the wonder drugs of chemotherapy and targeted treatments. Their side effects are nothing compared with what you get from them: a transitory reprieve from the way of all flesh.

If you are not a cancer patient, and you carry in your genes the defect that will strike you down sooner or later, this book will give you the strength you need for the big fight.

I have read many books about cancer, from Dr. Linus Pauling's *Cancer and Vitamin C*, Dr. Virginia Livingston-Wheeler's *The Conquest of Cancer*, and Dr. Max Gerson's *A Cancer Therapy* to Claudia I. Henschke's

*Lung Cancer*, Dr. Carolyn D. Runowicz and Dr. Sheldon H. Cherry's *The Answer to Cancer*, Adam Wishart's *One in Three*. This book, however, stands out from the crowd. Dr. Frank shows what is happening in that mysterious world of cancer research, of anticancer drugs that are being discovered and tested every day, and of that incomprehensible and baffling world of genetics and cancer.

I know you will feel as I do, that this book produces knowledge, hope, and optimism.

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## Preface

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Cancer is a frightening and complicated illness. Those affected by it face a series of new challenges after hearing the words “It’s cancer.” On being diagnosed, most people feel alone, as if nobody can truly relate to their innermost fears. They will receive advice from well-meaning friends and family and will seek answers in magazines and books and on the Internet. They will meet with specialists and strive to get the best medical care possible. They will challenge themselves to eat right, exercise right, live right, think positively, accept treatments diligently, and suffer side effects bravely. And they will often strive to contain their fears from their loved ones and caregivers.

Although the chances of beating cancer improve every year, the road to survival is often not easy. A cancer patient may need to undergo surgery and suffer pain and an altered body image and receive radiation treatments that may cause mouth sores, diarrhea, or skin irritation. They may be treated with chemotherapy and fight to keep their bodies intact while confronting hair loss, weakness, lowered immunity, and strange reactions to potent drugs.

Cancer patients may travel long distances or make frequent trips

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for their treatments, battling inconvenience and a diminished quality of life. They may face new financial burdens to pay for their medical care. They may choose to participate in research studies and experience rollercoaster fear and hope as a result of receiving unproven but promising treatments.

All cancer patients will, throughout their cancer journeys, suffer the anxiety of not knowing if their treatments are working or for how long their treatments will work or if they will survive their cancer.

With all these cancer-related issues to think about, it may come as a revelation to many battling cancer that throughout their cancer odyssey, they will rarely think clearly about the disease itself. Cancer patients think a great deal about what cancer is doing to their lives and to their bodies, and understandably so. They also concentrate on their choice of treatment and caregivers.

But why do so few focus healing thoughts on the very disease that has become the focus of their lives? Based on the multitude of questions I field daily from cancer patients and their loved ones, there is clearly a burning desire to better understand the cancer process. I believe the main reason that many people feel overwhelmed when it comes to trying to make sense of cancer is that few people know what the disease is or how to think about it.

*The very thing that has turned a person's life upside down is a mystery to them.*

My motivation to write this book stems directly from the words of my patients—more specifically, the burning questions that so many of them have and rarely get answered to their satisfaction. When first diagnosed, most patients want to know why they got cancer and if it could have been caught earlier. After deciding on the most appropriate treatment, many want to know how those treatments work and, if they should fail to control the cancer, why they failed. The answers, of course, are specific to each individual, and in most cases, accurate answers are truly not available. Yet after hearing the frustrated words of a vibrant woman dying from stomach cancer—“What the hell is this beast inside of me? I feel like I have no control over anything that is going on inside my

body”—I knew that more information needed to be made available to those who want answers or at least as much knowledge as possible.

The main goals of this book are to enable you to appreciate:

1. What cancer is and how it grows;
2. How oncologists determine the best treatment for each patient and what the different treatment strategies are; and
3. How to visualize cancer treatments at work in the body.

My purpose is to impart knowledge and a fresh perspective on some of the most complicated but essential aspects of cancer that have thus far received little attention. These include descriptions of the development, growth, and death of cancer (with treatment), written in a way that any reader without previous scientific knowledge will understand. I also include those aspects of practical cancer management that I have found most important in my day-to-day practice, such as how to cope in the face of a poor prognosis, facing fears of chemotherapy, and the distinction between chemotherapy and newer, targeted medicines. I hope you will find, as one of my patients did, that “reading this book is like having a conversation with your oncologist.”

By reading this book, you will come to understand that *no two cancers are exactly alike*. Two individuals with the exact same cancer diagnosis will almost certainly experience their diseases differently. Their cancers will grow at different rates, affect their bodies in distinct ways, and respond uniquely to the same treatments (one person’s cancer may disappear with a treatment, whereas another’s may grow while receiving the same treatment). Yet despite these differences and complexities, all cancers share features that explain why a cell anywhere in the body can become a cancer cell. Further, these shared biological roots explain why many of the same treatments are being applied to treat a wide range of cancers, such as angiogenesis inhibitor therapies that alter blood flow to a tumor. Thus, regardless of the type of cancer you may have or are interested in, the principles described in this book are directly relevant to it.

In Part 1, I draw on actual patient case histories, from my hematology

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and oncology practice, to explain the behavior of cancer in the body, how the different cancers are staged, and how oncologists estimate curability. Current thinking about the causes of cancer and the best means to prevent it is also covered.

In Part 2, I cover why oncologists recommend a particular sequence of surgery, chemotherapy, and/or radiation. Next, I explore how the major forms of cancer-fighting drugs (chemotherapy, targeted therapies, and hormone therapies) work to shut down cancer growth. Illustrations accompany the discussions to cement deeper levels of comprehension; they help you visualize and capture with your “mind’s eye” the essence of how treatments attack cancer. No longer will you feel like an innocent bystander, blindly accepting bewildering medicines for an impenetrable disease.

In the final chapter, you will learn the coping strategies recommended by those who have survived cancer so that you are in the right frame of mind to face the disease.

This book will be useful as an aid during various aspects of your treatment. While receiving chemotherapy or radiation therapy, you can use the pictures showing how that treatment works so that you can guide the therapy with your mind. The visualization of cancer dying and the body healing is an important tool because it enables you to engage your mental energies on the task at hand; doing so will promote a sense of calm in dealing with the disease.

If you are a cancer patient, I must tell you that I do not know if focusing your thoughts on cancer will help you live longer. But with a greater understanding of the disease you are battling, you will feel more in control of your situation. And with more control, you will be more relaxed and better able to cope with the many ups and downs that every cancer patient experiences.

I wish you long life and victory over cancer.

Richard C. Frank, MD

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