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Cancer Research

CANCER is the most difficult research problem man has ever attempted to solve. An early attack on the problem began with the founding of The American Association for Cancer Research in 1907. Previously, to be sure, medical authorities had recognized the great *clinical* problems presented by cancer. But not until 1907 did interest in cancer *research* crystallize sufficiently to bring together a group of cancer specialists, for the purpose of discussing their observations and formulating a research attack. In its early years the association was small, and an annual meeting proved adequate for the communication of results and ideas among members. Today, The American Association for Cancer Research has nearly a thousand members and publishes the monthly journal *Cancer Research*, in addition to continuing its meetings.

In the early days of cancer research a few scattered investigators carried on despite chronic lack of funds. The public attitude toward cancer at that time was a serious difficulty. In fact, up to a few years ago, even the best educated people were reluctant to admit that a close relative had died of cancer. This stigma hampered the flow of funds into cancer research. Hence, as a rule, only investigators with private means dared enter this field. Although the National Cancer Institute was established by Congress in 1937, it received an average annual appropriation of only half a million dollars during its first decade. And this money was for all cancer activities, not just for research.

Today the picture is entirely different. The public has become well aware of cancer and its problems, in part through mounting cancer mortality. But an even more potent factor in stimulating public awareness has been the annual, nationwide crusade, initiated by the American Cancer Society in 1945. This month-long effort combines an educational drive with a fund-raising campaign. The educational aspect lays heavy emphasis upon the vital role of research in the ulti-

mate control of cancer. At the same time substantial financial support for cancer research is obtained. At the beginning of the cancer crusade, the board of directors of the American Cancer Society voted to allocate to research at least 25 per cent of all money collected. Currently this research allocation amounts to some \$4,000,000 annually; since 1945 the total has been over \$20,000,000!

The society does not itself conduct laboratory or clinical research. The research funds it raises are, rather, granted as fellowships and scholarships for research training, as grants-in-aid supporting specific projects, and as institutional research grants. The latter grants—which the society pioneered—support broad, integrated cancer research programs, rather than projects.

Recommendations on awards of American Cancer Society fellowships, scholarships, and grants-in-aid, as well as scientific assistance and advice, are provided by the Committee on Growth of the National Research Council. This committee was created for such purposes in 1945, by contract between the society and the National Academy of Sciences. It functions through panels, each covering one of the disciplines, totaling upwards of a dozen, that comprise modern cancer research.

That is the cancer research problem and what has been done about it so far. What still needs to be done? Successful prosecution of cancer research demands sacrifices by the public and by scientists. The public must pay the bills, through tax support of Congressional appropriations and through voluntary contributions. Scientists must carry out the research, thereby perhaps foregoing material advantages to be found in other careers. Their compensation will be the satisfaction of participating in a program aimed toward ultimate eradication of one of the worst human scourges of all time.

J. EDWARD SPIKE, JR.

Research Committee, American Cancer Society, Inc.
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