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As We SEE IT

A Death Sentence for Cancer Patients

In criticizing the FDA's delay in approving new drugs, the Life Extension Foundation has previously stated, "If a cure for cancer were found today, almost every cancer patient alive would die before the FDA approved the breakthrough drug."

Our prediction may come true. The media has reported extensively on two new drugs, angiostatin and endostatin, developed by Harvard researcher Dr. Judah Folkman, that, when used in tandem, have cured cancer in mice.

The problem, however, is that the treatment will not begin to be tested in humans for another 12 to 18 months. For the millions of cancer patients alive today, the FDA's bureaucratic time table could turn out to be a death sentence.

What most people don't know is that these drugs have been tested on at least three different species so far, have shown only minimal side effects, and have cured virtually all solid tumors on which they have been tried.

The scientific evidence indicates that these drugs could have been tried on cancer patients already, but political reality dictates that these potential life-saving therapies linger in an Orwellian drug-approval quagmire. Today's cancer patients sit in the FDA's waiting room hoping they will be granted permission to live before they succumb to their disease.

The story with AIDS is quite different. When a breakthrough combination anti-viral drug therapy was announced last year, AIDS patients gained immediate access to it. In fact, the AIDS underground had been producing these anti-viral drugs several years before the published studies came out. In the 1980s, AIDS activists made it clear they were not going to let the FDA get in the way of new therapies to treat AIDS patients.

Cancer patients aren't so lucky. They have failed to organize and, as a result, the federal government alone determines when a cure for cancer can be legally sold in the United States.

These new cancer drugs may offer a unique opportunity to abolish FDA dictatorial power. If enough cancer patients stand up for their right to live, a political groundswell could prevent the FDA from criminally prosecuting companies that make these drugs available to cancer patients right now. Curing cancer with unapproved drugs would call into question the need for government control over medicine.

The Foundation is investigating every possible way of making angiostatin and endostatin therapy available to cancer patients now. In a future issue, we will present a new communications campaign designed to force the FDA to make these drugs available to terminally ill cancer patients.

In the meantime, we encourage cancer patients and their families to petition the FDA for immediate access to these drugs. Every day delayed means more than a thousand cancer patients may be needlessly dying.

It's time for cancer patients to revolt!

William Faloon
Vice President



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