

Progress Over a Decade, a Century, a Millennium ...

This issue marks the beginning of *Cancer Control's* 10th year of publication, and we are proud to report that our readership continues to grow, both nationally and internationally, in both electronic and print formats. Though changes and advances in cancer care over the past decade have been reported in *Cancer Control*, our goal for each issue has remained constant — to bring to our audience the best current information available on cancer detection and on the management of patients with cancer.

The earliest known references to cancer date to 1600 BC in ancient Egypt and describe surgical, pharmacologic, mechanical, and magical treatments for patients with cancer. The concept that cancer was incurable prevailed for thousands of years, into the 16th century AD. By the 17th century, the introduction of the microscope led to physiologic and pathologic revelations and new approaches in cancer treatment, but the lack of anesthesia, antisepsis, and blood transfusions made surgery a difficult choice. Before 1850, a patient undergoing surgical treatment for cancer faced not only the threat of infection or death (only 4% of breast cancer patients survived 3 years after surgery), but also the certainty of terrible pain.¹ In comparison, patients today can anticipate excellent outcomes and few

side effects for many cancers, thanks to the steady progress in cancer management over thousands of years. And even more optimistically, long-term survival expectations of patients with many types of cancer may actually be substantially better than those suggested by conventional cohort-based estimates. According to a recent study in the *Lancet*,² the results of period analysis showed that better long-term survival rates for patients with most cancers have been achieved by the end of the 20th century than the survival rates reported by cohort estimates, reflecting the positive effects of early detection and the treatment for cancers diagnosed in recent years.

In 1783, Benjamin Franklin wrote that "...the progress of human knowledge will be rapid and discoveries made of which we at the present have no conception. I begin to be almost sorry I was born so soon since I cannot have the happiness of knowing what will be known in years hence." While we don't have a crystal ball to see into the next generations, it's certain they will generate continued advances in the basic and clinical sciences pertaining to cancer that, by appropriate translational trials, will be applied to individuals and populations at risk for developing cancer and to those already diagnosed with cancer ... and the

unlimited access to this new information, which will in turn stimulate new paths of discovery, will continue through journals such as *Cancer Control*.

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References

1. *A Century of Oncology*. Greenwich, Conn: Greenwich Press; 1997.
2. Brenner H. Long-term survival rates of cancer patients achieved by the end of the 20th century: a period analysis. *Lancet*. 2002;360:1131-1135.

"The disease of cancer will be banished from life by calm, unhurrying, persistent men and women, working with every shiver of feeling controlled and suppressed, in hospitals and laboratories, and the motive that will conquer cancer will not be pity nor horror; it will be the curiosity to know how and why." — H. G. Wells, 1901