

Introduction to the Second Edition

Seventeen years ago, I discovered from my own brain-scanning experiment that *I* had brain cancer. From the waiting room on the tenth floor of the oncology building, I remember looking down at people in the street—distant and oblivious, going about their everyday life. I had been cast out of that life, separated from its goal-oriented busyness and from its promises of joy, by the prospect of a probable early death. No longer wrapped in the comfortable mantle of physician and scientist, I had become a cancer patient. This book is the story of what happened next—of the return to life and health—in fact, to a level of health I had never experienced before—while knowing I had cancer. It is the story of how I used my skills as a physician and a scientist to find out everything in the medical literature that would help me change the odds. Most important, it offers a new, scientifically based perspective on cancer that gives all of us a chance to better protect ourselves from this disease.

The publication of *Anticancer* two years ago launched a new chapter in my journey. After having kept my illness a secret for fourteen years, I was able to take what I had learned and bring it around the world to people who were frightened, depressed, or had lost hope. I was able to discuss these ideas with doctors, scientists, politicians, and activists and to compare my observations directly with their experiences. I also met a considerable number of patients who had changed the course of their illness with the advice that is given here. After publication in thirty-five languages in close to fifty countries, and after more than a million copies sold, my conviction that we can all powerfully strengthen our bodies' natural defenses against cancer has been reaffirmed. As has my belief that this approach should be a part of preventing or treating cancer for everyone. In the past two years, research has also yielded new proofs, explanations, and perspectives on how we can all learn to strengthen our health and improve our "terrain" by creating an anticancer biology within our body, and it has confirmed the importance of paying attention to how our emotions may affect the course of cancer.

So what exactly is new in this revised edition?

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In my many discussions with my medical colleagues—doctors, oncologists, psychiatrists—and with the public, I realized that the book’s message about nutrition has been much more easily grasped than the analysis of mind-body factors and the crucial role played by the feeling of helplessness in promoting cancer. If there is one single, clear, and emphatic message I’d like to send with this revised edition, it is that we must pay close attention to the mind-body connection, especially the negative impact of prolonged feelings of helplessness and despair. When left unattended, these feelings—not the stresses of life themselves—contribute to the inflammatory processes that can help cancer grow. There are truly effective and simple methods for taming those feelings, experiencing life on a more satisfying level, and reducing inflammation at the same time.

To address this, I’ve completely revised chapter 9, “The Anticancer Mind,” and I’ve also updated it with new studies that confirm how important it is to treat feelings of helplessness and despair in order to fight the progression of cancer. I have taken this opportunity to share the story of Kelly, who, in her struggle against breast cancer, was able to rely on friends to give her the support and love she needed to get through her ordeal. Recent studies show, in fact, that it’s not only the love of a husband, a wife, or children that can enable morale to remain strong and slow the progression of illness, but also the simple love and caring attention of friends old and new.

In terms of nutrition, promising recent studies have attested to a number of new anticancer foods. Large-stoned summer fruit, such as plums and peaches, can now be included in this category. New data about olive oil, which was already strongly recommended in the first edition, now make it a fully fledged anticancer food with activity against a variety of specific cancer types.

Also, two new studies have shown exactly how many cups of green tea need to be drunk per day to reduce the risk of breast or prostate cancer relapse by more than 50 percent. New natural sweeteners—acacia honey and coconut sugar, characterized by a low glycemic index—have appeared on the market alongside agave nectar. These are introduced in chapter 6.

New research has confirmed the importance of vitamin D3 in preventing cancer, particularly in countries where the lack of sunshine means that the skin cannot synthesize enough of this vitamin during the winter. I’ve therefore given more attention to this topic, and made new and more specific recommendations.

Finally, information has become available on how different cooking methods may preserve or, to the contrary, reduce the benefits of anticancer foods.

Almost every time I give a lecture, I’m asked whether cell phone use can cause cancer. In order to respond to these questions, in 2008 I brought together

a group of cancer specialists, toxicologists, epidemiologists, and a physicist. We published an appeal recommending a number of precautions to take for better, safer use of cell phones, as they are now an unavoidable feature of everyday life. The appeal was quickly picked up around the world and even led to a House of Representatives hearing in the United States in September 2008 and a public roundtable organized by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Health in France in April 2009. This edition summarizes the scientific literature on this subject and reprises the precautions that can be taken toward safer cell phone use.

Animal studies have now clearly identified links between a number of chemical products present in our daily environment and the progression of existing tumors. They include bisphenol A, which is contained in polycarbonate plastics (present in reusable plastic bottles and baby bottles, plastic microwave-safe containers, and a wide range of containers with plastic inner linings, such as cans). This substance diffuses into liquids when they are heated in a lab. When human breast cancer cells are exposed to doses of bisphenol A (BPA) corresponding to levels often found in people's blood, the cells no longer respond to chemotherapy. Comparable data have been obtained in studies of food additives based on inorganic phosphates (found in sweetened sodas, processed baked goods, etc.), which promote the progression of non-small-cell lung cancers. I felt this new data was important to discuss for people who may be undergoing treatment for these cancers.

In early 2009, a statement by the French National Cancer Institute and a study at Oxford University in Britain concluded that alcohol can increase the risk of developing cancer *at any dose*, even one glass of red wine. Together with Professor Béliveau from Montreal and researcher Michel de Lorgeril—a cardiologist, nutritionist, and pioneer of the Mediterranean diet—I published my disagreement with these conclusions, and that position is detailed here as well.

Since the original publication of *Anticancer: A New Way of Life*, numerous studies have confirmed its core message about the importance of the “terrain” in preventing or controlling cancer. I have integrated the information from these studies into the various chapters of this new edition. For example, one study published in the journal *Nature* in 2007 concluded that cancer can be understood as a breakdown in the balance between cancer cells that have always been “dormant” in the body and the natural defenses that normally keep them at bay (see chapter 4). This type of study highlights how important it is to nourish and strengthen our “terrain,” a topic revisited throughout *Anticancer*. To my mind, measures to reinforce the terrain should always accompany conventional treatments—which, of course, remain indispensable.

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There was also a major, 517-page report published in 2007 by the World Cancer Research Fund that synthesized several thousand studies. This report concurred with *Anticancer* that at least 40 percent of cancers can be prevented by simple changes in nutrition and physical activity (not to mention environmental factors).¹ Another report, released in 2009 by the French National Cancer Institute, reached these same conclusions.²

Two major epidemiological studies, one conducted within eleven European countries and spanning twelve years (the HALE study)³ and the other in a single region of the United Kingdom (twenty thousand subjects followed over the course of eleven years),⁴ reported results that were even more dramatic: *a more than 60 percent reduction in cancer mortality over the course of the study among people who had adopted a healthier lifestyle*. Increased life expectancy wasn't the only benefit: the English researchers concluded that people who practiced healthier living were fourteen years younger in terms of their biological age throughout the duration of the study. That translates into more energy to devote to work and family, an increased ability to concentrate, improved memory, and a reduction in physical discomfort. In their conclusion, the Cambridge researchers explain, "The evidence that behavioral factors such as diet, smoking, and physical activity influence health is overwhelming."

The importance of limiting consumption of refined sugar and white flour has been confirmed by new analysis of the massive American Women's Health Initiative. This study demonstrated that the link between obesity and breast cancer is dependent on the level of insulin in the blood, and thus the level of sugar in the diet. The study also showed that sugar may be contributing more to cancer than hormone replacement therapy.

In November 2008 a research article in the journal *Cancer* made the perfect case for the legitimacy of the advice presented in *Anticancer*. Women whose breast cancer had spread to their lymph nodes were followed for eleven years after they had received conventional treatment. Over the years, those who followed, in addition to their medical treatment, a program of nutritional education, physical activity, and better stress management saw their risk of dying decrease 68 percent compared to those who received conventional treatment only (see chapter 9).

In another nicely executed study, in 2008 Professor Dean Ornish of the University of California at San Francisco demonstrated that lifestyle changes in diet and exercise and stress reduction actually modified gene expression deep within cancer cells (see chapter 2).

Since *Anticancer* was published, I've given over a hundred lectures in fifteen different countries. In talking with the people who have come to hear

me speak, I've learned a great deal about how we experience fear of cancer, and I think I've come to understand what people have found worthwhile in this book. Simply put, we're used to receiving a message of despair. Cancer is perceived as a kind of unlucky draw in the grand genetic lottery, an illness that does not respond well to most treatments and for which all hopes are pinned on the advent of a miraculous new cure—one that only the largest research labs could possibly develop.

In this context, I realize that any approach that is not focused on conventional treatment risks being accused of arousing “false hope.” But I know—having learned this when I faced my own cancer—that such thinking robs patients of their power to act; and I mean this in terms of real power, not some illusion. Promoting this mind-set of helplessness is psychologically demeaning, medically dangerous, and most important, it is not grounded in good science. In the past thirty years, science has made prodigious advances and has demonstrated that all of us have the ability to protect ourselves from cancer and to contribute by our own means to healing it. *Refusing* to explain that we have this ability contributes to a sense of false hopelessness, and it is because they reject that false hopelessness that so many people have found *Anticancer* appealing.

I have been heartened by the positive reaction of many institutional cancer specialists to the book's message. In Europe, Professor Jean-Marie Andrieu, who heads the department of Oncology at the Georges Pompidou European Hospital, told the daily newspaper *Le Monde*, “I learned an enormous amount from this book. And you know what? I've changed my diet. And I've already lost six kilos (13 pounds).”

In Italy, the national Anti-Cancer League* endorsed *Anticancer*, placed its logo on the book jacket, and organized the press launch in Rome in October 2008. The League emphasized the importance of the book's message in terms of how best to prevent cancer, bolster the benefits of conventional treatment, and minimize relapses.

And in the United States, Professor John Mendelsohn, the president of the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center—the largest cancer treatment and research center in the country—wrote, “I found *Anticancer* to be a highly readable and well-researched book. It provides the understanding needed for the practice of evidence-based cancer prevention and risk reduction. It also fills an important gap in our knowledge of how patients can contribute to their own care by supplementing conventional medical treatment.”

I've lost some friends since this book was first published. Some of them

* Lega Italiana per la Lotta contro i Tumori

were people who applied its principles in their own lives. Unfortunately, the methods and principles outlined here do not guarantee success against cancer. Yet I was deeply moved when I heard from them, or from their families, that they never regretted having tried all the suggestions in the book. One family member wrote to me: “Right up until the end, it’s given her the feeling that she still held her life in her own hands.” It’s been a relief for me to learn that I had not encouraged false hopes, and it has confirmed my conviction that even if the *Anticancer* program cannot (and does not) claim to hold cancer at bay for everyone, it does help sustain life, whatever the outcome.

An amazing number of patients and their families have sent me messages—in person, by e-mail, or through my blog—bearing witness to the benefits they’ve gained from reading *Anticancer* and applying its advice. A fifty-year-old salesman who does not have cancer told me how much his life has changed since he started drinking green tea, adding turmeric to his food every day (with black pepper!), and managing his stress with cardiac coherence. A woman suffering from lymphoma wrote that she has read and reread *Anticancer*, in snippets, before going to sleep, like a book you might read to soothe a child. An engineer with prostate cancer sent me a graph of his blood tests from the past three years: His blood marker of cancer activity (PSA) has been dropping regularly since he began applying *Anticancer* principles, and his oncologist has been repeatedly persuaded to delay the surgery that was initially scheduled two years ago. A thirty-two-year-old woman, undergoing chemotherapy for a relapse of her breast cancer—so young!—wrote to tell me about the positive effects of the aerobic exercises she’s been doing since she read the story of Jacqueline, who started practicing karate during her own treatment (see chapter 11).

Last, and a very particular source of satisfaction for me, is that two of the oncologists I consulted over the years for my own treatment contacted me after having read *Anticancer*. They asked me how best to slow down the progression of their own cancer by improving their “terrain.” It was a great pleasure to be able to draw upon my research and return a measure of the compassion these doctors once showed me when I needed it most.

I’m happy and proud to present this second edition. The task of rereading the manuscript and improving it was a light one. Several times I noted with surprise that I had forgotten the details of a particular study, or of a story, since writing it. Reading all of them again has encouraged me to hold the course toward what I hope will continue to be full health. And I wish the same for you.