

**THE MODERN TREATMENT  
OF CANCEROUS  
DISEASES BY CAUSTICS  
OR ENUCLEATION**

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The modern treatment of cancerous diseases by caustics or enucleation by Langston Parker

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**LANGSTON PARKER**

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THE MODERN TREATMENT  
OF  
CANCEROUS DISEASES

BY  
*CAUSTICS OR ENUCLEATION;*

AN INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTS OF MANY NEW REMEDIES  
IN ARRESTING THE PROGRESS OF CANCER.

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THE MODERN TREATMENT OF CANCEROUS  
DISEASES BY CAUSTICS.

**T**HE experience of a moderately long surgical career, during which time the treatment of an unusual number of cancerous diseases has fallen to my lot, painfully impressed me, as it must have done other surgeons similarly placed, with the inutility of operations with the knife, performed for the removal of the disease. During a period when my mind was more than usually occupied with these convictions I was honoured, by the request of the Council of the British Medical Association, to deliver the Annual Address on Surgery. I chose for the subject of that address an inquiry into the efficacy of the treatment of cancer by other means than those of the knife. The following pages contain the substance of that address; but they contain also much additional matter; with a detail of part of my surgical experience on the subject, and the

General  
insuccess of  
operations  
with the  
knife.

Treatment  
by enuclea-  
tion.

narration of some cases I have treated, which certainly afford much encouragement to give these remedies further trials.

In the following pages I shall hardly go so far as to consider the whole surgical treatment of cancer, but only one branch of it, and that is, the treatment of cancerous diseases by caustics or enucleation, a subject to which little attention has been paid in Great Britain, at least systematically, although there are many isolated cases recorded, as I shall presently shew, which point to this mode of treatment (under certain circumstances) as valuable, effective, and safe. On the continent of Europe this practice is fast gaining ground, and many systematic works have been published within the last eight or ten years on the effects of different caustics in the cure of cancer, whilst some French hospital surgeons have devoted courses of clinical lectures to this branch of surgical inquiry.\* The three modes at present known and practised for the cure (?) of cancer are three: ablation or excision, compression, and the destruction or enucleation of the disease by escharotic or caustic substances. I shall not enter into the consideration of the effects of the first mode of treatment, viz., that by excision. It may be sufficient for me here to observe that, without weighing the comparative methods of excision and

By excision ;  
compression ;  
caustics.

\* " *Léçons Cliniques sur les Affections Cancéreuses, professées à l'Hôpital Cochin.*" Par M. le Dr. Maisonneuve. Paris. 1852-1854.

cauterization, the latter practice may be adopted in cases where excision is utterly out of the question. A patient of mine, a lady of middle age, had suffered for many years from a recurrent cancrroid tumour in the back. I removed it several times by means of the knife, and with the chloride of zinc paste. The tumour did not return after its removal with the paste for nine years, but after its removal with the knife it came back in less than one. At the present moment the patient enjoys excellent health, and it is nearly two years since the last removal with the chloride. Hence, on this point alone, cauterization becomes a legitimate subject for inquiry. I shall not enter into the question of the little success which excision, as a curative measure, has met with, nor enumerate the nineteen reasons brought forward by Dr. Walsh against its performance. Much has been written on this subject during the last few years, and in balancing the duration of life between cancerous diseases which have been suffered to run their course, and those which have been removed by the knife, it has been shewn that there is a "small advantage only in favour of the operation." So that the patient has to suffer the pain and risk of it for very little gain. The latter remarks only refer more particularly to the removal of cancer of the breast, whereas what I have to say will bear upon the treatment of cancer in all organs. I shall only make a passing allusion to the statistics furnished by M. Canquoin, who gives eighty-two



## Compression.

per cent of cures as the result of the practice of enucleation, and ten per cent as the result of excision.\*

The second treatment to which I shall direct attention is by compression. This was first suggested by Mr. Young, a surgeon of Bedford, early in the present century. It is needless for me to enter into the details of the mode in which compression is practised, for although numerous cases of its successful application have been accorded, it can hardly be ranked amongst the "modern remedies" for the treatment of cancer. The mode originally suggested by Mr. Young has been modified in various ways; but the most modern and approved is that suggested by Dr. Arnott by the air-pad and spring. Compression had, in its day, many and powerful supporters, and the late Dr. Dennan addressed a pamphlet to Sir Benjamin, then Mr., Brodie, strongly advocating this plan of treatment.† Compression, first suggested by Mr. Young, found on the continent of Europe many advocates, and amongst the chief of these may be mentioned M. Recamier of the Hôtel-Dieu.‡ In the work of M. Recamier, published in 1829, many cases

\* "Traitement du Cancer: Exposé complet de la Méthode du Docteur Canquoin, excluant toute Operation par l'Instrument tranchant"—page 181.

† "Observations on the Cure of Cancer, with some remarks upon Mr. Young's Treatment of that Disease." By Thomas Denman, M.D. London. 1806.

‡ "Recherches sur le Traitement du Cancer par la Compression méthodique, simple ou combinée, &c." By J. C. A. Récamier, Médecin de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Paris. Paris. 1829.

of the cure of cancer by compression are recorded. Thirty cases of absolute cure (?) of cancer are there given. It is true these cases have been analyzed by M. Lebert in his treatise on cancerous diseases, who throws much doubt on the real nature of the disease and the results of treatment. Bayle, in the fourth volume of the "*Bibliothèque de Thérapeutique*," published in 1837, gives the results of 127 recorded cases, out of which were seventy-one absolute cures. In commenting on these cases, Dr. Walsh observes, that "in some of the cases alleged to be cancerous, neither of the anatomical species of that affection existed; but it is, on the other hand, perfectly unquestionable that many of the absorbed growths were not only actually scirrhus, but had already become the seat of ulceration when submitted to compression."

Compression has found many advocates amongst very recent writers, especially Dr. Bennett, Dr. Walsh, and Dr. James Arnott. Its advocates, however, speak rather theoretically, than practically, of its merits, and there are few or no data to guide us in estimating the present real position of this method as a curative agent in the "treatment of cancer." If we take the modern theory, or rather the pathology of cancer as the basis of our explanations, Dr. Bennett tells us that pressure, "restraining the growth of and favouring the disintegration of the cancer cells, necessarily leads to their re-entrance into the blood, and their subsequent excretion through the

Evils of  
compression.

Is cancer in  
its origin  
a local  
disease.

Modern  
opinions on  
the subject.

emunctories.”\* Should pressure have the effect here described, it is possible, nay, probable, that the cell, re-entering the blood, may be deposited as a nucleus of cancer in some other remote organ, either external or internal, and there have occurred cases where such consequences have appeared to follow the employment of pressure. It is too much, however, to say that such secondary deposit has been actually due to the employment of pressure, since such consequences have frequently taken place, whatever mode of treatment may have been employed. A question naturally arises here, upon the solution of which the whole argument on the curability of cancer unquestionably turns, and that is, the primary nature of a cancerous tumour;—whether a cancerous disease be a local manifestation of an already existing constitutional taint, or whether it be a local disease, the result of injury, or some other local and hitherto unexplained cause? As the disease has presented itself to me, its first aspect is that of diseased texture only, and not of one having any remote or general cause. (The opinion of Mr. C. H. Moore, F.R.C.S., Surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital, where there is a separate cancer ward)—*Association Journal*, April 21, 1866, p. 406. The most prevailing modern opinion is, that a cancer is the local manifestation of an already existing constitutional

\* “On Cancerous and Canceroid Growths.” By John Hughes Bennett, M.D. Edinburgh. 1849.