It is a very special privilege to welcome you on behalf of the National Cancer Advisory Board to this three-day conference on nutrition and cancer.

Nutrition and cancer are two huge categories of human knowledge, and the recognition of some of their interrelationships has been slow in coming. Actually, the group that stimulated the Congress to give the National Cancer Institute a specific charge to study nutrition in relation to cancer came not from the National Cancer Institute, the National Cancer Advisory Board, or the President's Cancer Panel, but from the Candlelighters, the wonderful group of volunteers that has had such a strong interest in childhood cancer. We are fortunate to have two of their representatives as participants in this conference, Toby Bogoroff from Fort Lauderdale, and Grace Powers Monaco of Washington, D.C. Grace Monaco is the National Liaison Chairman of the Candlelighters.

Looking back, all have recognized anorexia and cachexia, which characterize terminal cancer. Most Americans have worried about foods as the cause of cancer; witness the cranberry scare a few years ago. A few explorers made the observation that the starved cancer-bearing animal outlived his well-fed control. This dimmed the hopes of those who looked to food for therapy but did not extinguish these hopes and indeed it should not.

Into this confused picture came a fresh observation and, naturally enough, it came from a team with fresh minds who had just begun to think about cancer. Dennis Law, a Chinese-American medical student from Hong Kong, and Dr. Stanley Dudrick wanted to test the effect of nutrition on immunity and particularly on cellular immunity (2). They gained the collaboration of an internist, Dr. N. I. Abdou, who had a detailed knowledge of the methods of measuring cellular immunity, and were able to show that hyperalimentation often restored cellular immunity in depleted individuals—as measured by the methods that Abdou used.

More recently, Dr. Edward M. Copeland, Dr. Dudrick, and their group in Houston have shown a strong correlation between favorable responses to certain chemotherapy programs directed against cancer and the immune capacity of the individual (1). Thus, we appear to have hope that nutritional therapy may be a valuable component of combined therapy, along with surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy, in the conventional sense of giving antigens or transferring antibodies.

Dr. Gori and Dr. Milder, working with a very knowledgeable committee, have put together a truly superb program. It is broad in scope. It will be presented by persons of great depth of knowledge, and it provides generous periods of time for give-and-take discussions. I hope that not only will each of us be able to add to his knowledge, but that it will stimulate some new ideas and stimulate the will to test out some of the ideas which you brought with you. Thank you.

References


Welcome Address: Conference on Nutrition and Cancer Therapy

Jonathan E. Rhoads