

ON THE CAUSATION AND EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF UTERINE CANCER*

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Although this paper is intended to deal primarily with the early diagnosis of uterine cancer, still it is very important to survey briefly the prevalent ideas in regard to the causation of cancer in general, since, if one has some idea of the probable causation, one may be led the more reasonably to an early diagnosis of the condition.

First of all, we must realize that cancer is universal, all races of mankind and all vertebrates being liable to it.

Bashford states that the vegetarian castes of India are no more exempt than are those living on a mixed diet, though it has been stated that the Jews of East London become more liable to it after some years of living in England. Hence, the mode of living would seem to have little to do with the causation of the disease.

Again, the disease seems to have a predilection for certain regions of the body in different species, mammary cancer being common in the mouse, but rare in cattle.

Experimentally, there can be produced:

1. Local infiltration.
2. Systemic dissemination.
3. Terminal cachexia.

The transference is a true transplantation of living cells, infection taking no part. Hence, Ribbert's view of cancer is that it is a continuance of growth of cells which primarily were confined to a circumscribed area.

Age incidence.—This has been shown to be the same for short-lived animals as for man.

Now, explanations of cancer must agree with:

1. That, statistically, cancer is a function of age.
2. That, biologically, cancer is a function of senescence, and, one may add, of immaturity.

The law of age incidence applies alike to individuals of a species and individual organs and tissues. For example, (2) cancer of the breast before puberty is practically unknown.

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