



CANCER

A CODE RED PROJECT

THE ENEMY WITHIN CONCLUSION

PRAYING FOR A CURE



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The Hamilton Spectator

ASK ANY CANCER SURVIVOR and they can recall in vivid detail the day they heard the dreaded words “You’ve got cancer.”

It’s been 42 years since U.S. president Richard Nixon launched the so-called war on cancer, and yet four decades later, with a cure as elusive as ever, cancer still scares us to the core.

Is it the perverse lottery aspect of getting cancer that scares us most? The idea that you can be living your life and then — without warning, without a sign — a switch gets flipped somewhere inside your body and this ticking time bomb is lit?

Even when the link between cause and effect is clear and irrefutable, there’s still a randomness to getting cancer. We all know there’s a strong connection between smoking and cancer yet three out of four regular smokers will still somehow manage to escape lung cancer.

Or is it cancer’s lethality that scares us most?

We know there’s a randomness associated with that, too. Some people beat it, others die from it.

But what if dying from cancer isn’t as random as we believe?

What if your ability to survive cancer has something to do with the size of your paycheck or the amount of education you’ve had?

That’s what the findings of The Spectator’s exhaustive new cancer investigation strongly suggest.

Ten years of data broken down to the neighbourhood level show that poorer people in Hamilton, on average, are dying of cancer at significantly higher rates than richer people. One neighbourhood in the inner-city core, for example, has a cancer death rate that’s four times higher than a neighbourhood in Ancaster, the city’s wealthiest suburb.

The question is why? Why are poorer people dying of cancer more frequently than richer people?

The reasons are enough to shake one’s faith in this country’s beloved universal health care system, long presumed to be the great equalizer that bridges the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Disturbing continues // BA2



PHOTOS BY JOHN RENNISON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

A higher percentage of people from impoverished neighbourhoods get, and die of, cancer than those in richer neighbourhoods. How do we address access to care, disparity and social justice?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN RENNISON AND GARY YOKOYAMA, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR



Steve Rudaniecki, 61, has had stage IV leukemia for 10 years and was down to his last months. Chemo wasn’t working but a last-resort clinical trial gave him hope. ‘We’ve talked about it a lot — do you want to throw in the towel?’