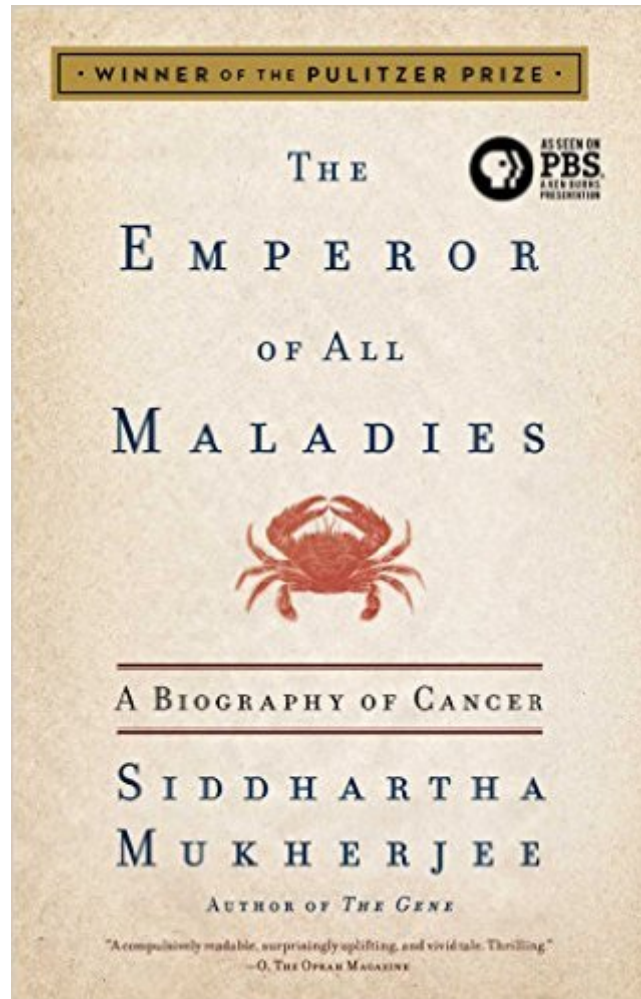


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The Emperor Of All Maladies: A Biography Of Cancer



Synopsis

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, and now a documentary from Ken Burns on PBS, *The Emperor of All Maladies* is a magnificent, profoundly humane biography of cancer—from its first documented appearances thousands of years ago through the epic battles in the twentieth century to cure, control, and conquer it to a radical new understanding of its essence. Physician, researcher, and award-winning science writer, Siddhartha Mukherjee examines cancer with a biologist's precision, a historian's perspective, and a biographer's passion. The result is an astonishingly lucid and eloquent chronicle of a disease humans have lived with—and perished from—for more than five thousand years. The story of cancer is a story of human ingenuity, resilience, and perseverance, but also of hubris, paternalism, and misperception. Mukherjee recounts centuries of discoveries, setbacks, victories, and deaths, told through the eyes of his predecessors and peers, training their wits against an infinitely resourceful adversary that, just three decades ago, was thought to be easily vanquished in an all-out war against cancer. The book reads like a literary thriller with cancer as the protagonist. From the Persian Queen Atossa, whose Greek slave may have cut off her diseased breast, to the nineteenth-century recipients of primitive radiation and chemotherapy to Mukherjee's own leukemia patient, Carla, *The Emperor of All Maladies* is about the people who have soldiered through fiercely demanding regimens in order to survive—and to increase our understanding of this iconic disease. Riveting, urgent, and surprising, *The Emperor of All Maladies* provides a fascinating glimpse into the future of cancer treatments. It is an illuminating book that provides hope and clarity to those seeking to demystify cancer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

You remember the scene in the film "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid"? From the top of the bluff looking into the distance at dusk, Butch sees the lights of the pursuing posse which doesn't stop tracking them even at night and says "How many are following us? They're beginning to get on my nerves. Who are those guys?" In the same threatening way cancers have been dogging human beings since the dawn of time, and although we now know quite a lot about cancer we still don't really know "who are those guys" or how to shake them. And they sure are "beginning to get on our nerves" as Butch said. Almost one out of four of us will eventually wrestle with cancer -- the defining illness of our generation -- and lose our lives in the process. Until it catches up with us most of us will try to ignore this fact, just as when we were very young children alone in our bedroom trying to go to sleep at night we tried to ignore the monster that we sometimes feared might be lurking in our bedroom closet. Enter oncologist Siddhartha Mukherjee who almost parentally takes us by the hand to give us the courage to open with him the door to that dark and foreboding closet in order to see what is really lurking inside. Since eventually most of us are going to have to wrestle with this monster anyway -- either as a victim or as a loved one of a victim -- looking intelligently and closely into that dark closet does diminish fear and enhance wise perspective. And on this incredible journey into the depths of that darkness, what an absolutely marvelous guide is this modern day Virgil called Siddhartha Mukherjee as he leads us on this long and often harrowing journey through the swarth that cancer has cut through mankind throughout time. Mukherjee is a veritable kaleidoscope. Turn his writing one way and you experience him as an exciting writer of page-turning detective stories or mystery stories; turn him another and he's a highly effective communicator of cellular biology; turn him a third and you get superb science writing; turn him a fourth and he has the grandeur and broad sweep of an excellent historian. It's hard to believe that this one book, combining all of these appealing characteristics, is the work of just one man. And underlying it all is his sterling medical training and credentials which have been enumerated often elsewhere. The book itself is a tour de force. It is the first book of such extraordinary scope regarding cancer. Its architectural structure brings to mind Melville's *Moby Dick* and how effectively and artfully Melville braided together the three strands of his great classic: a grand adventure story, the technology of whaling, and a treatise of humanity and philosophy. Equally effectively does Mukherjee weave together all the various facets of this iconic disease throughout history, from describing cancer from the patient's perspective, to viewing the never ending battles of physicians and medical researchers

with cancer over the centuries, to examining the mysteries of the cellular nature of cancer itself and what really goes on in there, to the pro and con impact of this never ending plague on the spirit of the individual human and on our race as a whole, to peering into a crystal ball for a glance of cancer's and our future together. While doing all of this the alchemy of Mukherjee's writing continually turns science into poetry and poetry into science. Simply put, it is so good, and so incandescently clear and lucid, and so powerful, and so engrossing, and so easily consumed that you will not lay it down without someone or circumstances forcing you to. Had I read this book in my teens I would have found my life's career. I can only imagine that while you are reading this book, somewhere there will be some very young teenage girl or boy who will also be reading it at the same time you are, and who will become totally hooked by this book just as you will be, and who will go on to make a career in cancer research, a career that might provide the breakthrough that humanity has been searching and hoping for all of these many centuries. Thus although you will never know it, you will have "been there" at the initial motivation of that person and thus indirectly present at the earliest genesis of the eventual great idea. This book has THAT potential. It is THAT good. Kenneth E. MacWilliams

**I am pleased that Dr. Mukherjee has won the Pulitzer prize in general non fiction for this book, 4-18-11 In the United States one in three women and one in two men will develop cancer in their lifetime. Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee, a medical oncologist, has written a definitive history of cancer. It may be one of the best medical books I have read. Complex but simple in terms of understanding. A timeline of a disease and those who waged the wars. In 1600 BC the first case of probable breast cancer was documented. In the thousands of years since, the Greek word, 'onkos', meaning mass or burden, has become the disease of our time. Cancer. The title of the book, is "a quote from a 19Th century physician" Dr Mukherjee had found inscribed in a library book that "cancer is the emperor of all maladies, the king of our terrors". As a health care professional and as a woman who is six years post breast cancer, Cancer has played a big part in my life. I used to walk by the Oncology clinic, and quicken my pace. I used to give chemotherapy to my patients, before it was discovered that the chemo was so toxic that it needed to be made under sterile conditions and given by professionals who specialized in Oncology. Dr Mukherjee, wisely discusses cancer in the context of patients, those of us who suffer. After all it is because of the patients, the people who have gone before us, who have contracted some form of cancer, they are the base of this science. Dr Mukherjee started his immersion in cancer medicine at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. He relates the beginning of the study of ALL, Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia, by Dr Sidney Farber in

1947. Dr Farber, a pathologist at the time decided to change his focus and start caring for patients. He was given a medication to trial for ALL, and though most of his patients died, some survived to remission. This opened his world and with the help of Mary Lasker, and Charles E Dana, philanthropists, they opened one of the first clinics that specialized in cancer care and research, The Dana Farber Cancer Center. Dr Mukherjee gives us the timeline of ALL and lymphomas and the medications that turned into chemotherapy. The development of specific care for blood cancers and the emergence of AIDS and patient activism. He discusses the surgery for breast cancer. It was thought that the more radical the surgery the better the outcomes. We now know that lumpectomies have an excellent outcome. But, women before me had a radical removal of breast, chest tissue, lymph nodes and sometimes ribs. The lesson learned is that breast cancer is very curable now and all those men and women, the patients who suffered, gave us the answers and cancer care has moved on. The onslaught of chemotherapies changed the face of cancer, and the 1970's served us well. In 1986 the first outcomes of cancer care were measured. Tobacco emerged as an addiction and soon lung cancer was a leading cause of death. Presidential Commissions ensued, politics entered the world of cancer, the war against cancer and the war against smoking. The Pap smear was developed, and prevention came to the fore. The two sides of cancer, the researchers and the physicians at the bedside, who often thought never the twain shall meet, recognized the importance of research to bedside. The story of the boy 'Jimmy' from New Sweden, Maine, became the face of childhood cancer. The Jimmy Fund, a Boston Red Sox charity in Boston, is still going strong today. 'Jimmy' opened the door to the public for the need for money and research, and care for those with cancer. We follow Dr Mukherjee with one of his first patients, Carla, from her diagnosis through her treatment. He has given a face to cancer. We all know someone with cancer, those who survived and those who did not. Cancer prevention is now the wave of the future. "Cancer is and may always be part of the burden we carry with us," says Dr Mukherjee. He has now written a "biography of cancer" for us, those without special medical knowledge. However, he does go astray in some discussions such as genetics. I have an excellent medical background, and found I was floundering at times. As I discovered, and Dr. Mukherjee agrees, our patients are our heroes. They/we withstand the horrors of cancer, and the horrific, sometimes deadly treatments. The stories of his patients make us weep, and the complex decision making about their care make him the most caring of physicians. The 'quest for the cure' is the basis of all science and research, and Dr Mukherjee has written a superb tome in language that we can all attempt to understand. The biography of Cancer. Cancer may always be with us, Dr Mukherjee hopes that we outwit this devil and survive. Highly Recommended. prisrob 11-13-10 Jimmy Fund of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, The (MA) (Images of

America)Early Detection: Women, Cancer, and Awareness Campaigns in the Twentieth-Century United States

The brilliance of this book is the effortless with which the author draws the reader into the world of cancer and keeps him there as a tourist or witness. Dr. Mukherjee's engaging style, precision of prose and overwhelming compassion imbue this work with an energy that carries the reader along a ride like none other. Whether the reader is a basic scientist or sociologist, a patient or healthcare provider, a philosopher or philanderer, this book will appeal, entertain and educate. A remarkable achievement.

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