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[Home](#) > Stress and Cancer

Stress and Cancer

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Various studies by early and modern researchers showed evidences that stress is a possible cause or a probable contributory factor to cancer, one of the most feared disease process of today's generation.

Stress has been linked to various diseases over time. If you ask a person what diseases are connected to stress, you'll probably get answers like "heart attack", "stroke" or "mental disorders". But not many people have realized that stress is highly correlated to cancer, perhaps due to the ongoing research digging about the mystery behind this connection.

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Early Literature On Stress and Cancer

The relation between stress and cancer had been a very old issue, probably as ancient as medicine's recorded history. Galen, a scholar who wrote a dissertation about tumors entitled "De Tumoribus", believed that women who were more melancholic than other women tend to be highly at risk for cancer. Because his research was performed over 2000 years ago, the presumption was that too much melancholy in women was because of too much "melas chole" or black bile.

The English medical world had been kept into deep silence about this topic until the year 1701, when Gendron, a British doctor, brought up the subject again by indicating that disastrous events in one's life result to much grief, which could cause cancer. In 1709,

another researcher named Burrows agreed to this presumption.

As time passed by, more and more physicians and researchers delved deeper into the connection between stress and cancer. According to Stern, women suffering from cervical cancer were identified as frustrated and more sensitive than normal. In addition, Nunn stated that tumor growth was faster in women who had negative emotional factors.

The early nineteenth century doctors were supported by Walshe, emphasized that unfortunate events in one's life, as well as the "habitual gloomings of the temper" predispose a person to cancer. Furthermore, Snow performed a review of London Cancer Hospital patients, in which he found out that breast and uterine cancer were more probable in those participants who lost a near relative, which was a very strong stressor.

Modern Research On Stress and Cancer

The start of the 20th century was the advent of various research regarding the link between cancer and external, physical factors, such as food, pathogens and pollution. Compared to the studies on these subjects, little attention was given to the effects of stress on cancer [1], and vice versa. However, the recent years showed that stress which caused negative feelings and emotions tend to contribute to the emergence as well as the progression of various illnesses, particularly cancer.

In a research conducted by Everson, et.al., 2500 men were evaluated for their respective feelings of "hopelessness". Six years later, those participants who felt hopeless most of the time were more than thrice as probable to have died from cancer than those who seldom felt hopeless.

While there is still yet to be studied on the influence of stress to cancer and vice versa, there were other literature that emphasized how stressful lifestyle have potentially predisposed people to cancer. For instance, Dr. Albert Schweizer stated that there were zero cases of cancer in Gabon in 1913; however, years later he found out that cancer cases started to increase in number, as he noted that the lifestyle of the natives were gradually getting patterned to the lifestyle of the whites.

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Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/stress>