Advocating For You

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Smart + Strong started publishing POZ magazine in 1994, around the same time I started my career as a medical writer focusing on HIV. It was a dark era in the AIDS epidemic. Although a few early drugs were available, they came with grueling side effects and usually didn't work for very long before the virus developed resistance.

Yet within a couple of years, combination antiretroviral treatment gave millions of people a new lease on life, and today most people can keep HIV under control with a single, well-tolerated daily pill.

The cancer field is also on the brink of a breakthrough as researchers learn more about the biology of cancer and how to treat it.

I lost my dad to lung cancer in 2003. He underwent a couple of rounds of traditional chemotherapy but ultimately decided the side effects weren't worth it and declined further treatment.

Since that time, researchers have developed targeted therapies that are more effective and easier to take. Novel immunotherapies—like the groundbreaking CAR-T therapy—offer tantalizing promise. But these treatments don't yet work for everyone or for all types of cancer.

As scientists unravel the medical mysteries, many people are still using radiation and chemotherapy. A key part of cancer care is minimizing side effects and maximizing quality of life, as described in our profile of Deborah Cohan, MD, and our interview with Lillie Shockney, RN. We hope that sharing the stories of people living with and surviving cancer, like Charlie Christmann and Catherine Guthrie, will offer support and help build community.

As noted HIV/AIDS advocate Tim Horn reminds us, advocacy doesn't end when science produces breakthrough therapies, but must continue to ensure that everyone can get the treatment they need.

Whether you are newly diagnosed, have advanced disease or are a long-term survivor, we hope you will consider Cancer Health part of your advocacy team.

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