Cancer Films That the Oscars (Somehow) Missed

Awkwafina got a Golden Globes award for “Farewell,” but none of these movies got an Oscar nod.

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You wouldn’t know if from the 2020 Oscar nominations, but cancer was central to several movies last year. Fortunately, the Golden Globes paid more attention.

If there were a Cancer Film Awards, these films might take home statues:

Farewell. “A new film about cancer, loss and family goodbyes has wooed critics and audiences alike with its smart cross-cultural commentary and keen invitation to audiences to reflect on the passing of relatives close to them,” is how Cancer Health covered this film, directed by Lulu Wang. The Golden Globes gave Awkwafina the award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture—Musical or Comedy; the Oscars passed.

Dark Waters, a film based on true events and starring actor Mark Ruffalo that Cancer Health reported “sheds light on how one of America’s most powerful corporations contaminated a town’s drinking water with a toxic chemical linked to cancer” was shut out of both the Golden Globes and the Oscars.

Chernobyl, which won numerous Emmys, wasn’t eligible for an Oscar but it did win two Golden Globes. We reported on a fascinating new discovery: Many of the plants that had been devastated by the nuclear accident have been returning to robust health.

A great cancer documentary also eluded the spotlight. “It’s not easy to make an edge-of-your-seat film about scientific advances,” we wrote. “But the new documentary Jim Allison: Breakthrough does a pretty amazing job…by the time Allison—who lost his mother to lymphoma, his brother to prostate cancer and who now has prostate cancer himself—plays harmonica onstage with Willie Nelson, the movie feels like a human triumph.”

Looking for more great films about cancer? See our slide show “20 Essential Films About Cancer.”

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