

# Cancer and Present-Day Human Sexual Functioning: What is the Connection?

**By Michael Mannion**

Perhaps the very title of this article is puzzling to many readers. What does the question even mean, many may wonder. "What connection between human sexual functioning and cancer?" some may ask.

In 1999, researchers in the United States reported that between 30-40 percent of American men and women suffered from such severe sexual dysfunction that they had no sexual life and did not desire one. Are there pathological physical consequences to this disturbance of a basic biological function as well as emotional and psychological ones?

Let's look at the American Cancer Society's (ACS) 2003 annual cancer statistics, which were published in the January/February 2003 issue of the Society's publication, *Ca-A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, to get a clear picture of cancer incidence and mortality involving the breast and genital system in men and women.

The ACS estimates that in 2003, there will be about 1,334,100 new cancer cases in men and women in the United States. The breakdown by gender is 675,300 new cancer cases among men and 658,800 among women.

The ACS also estimates that there will be 556,500 deaths from cancer in the United States in 2003, of which 285,900 will occur in men and 270,600 in women.

There will be an estimated 212,600 new cases of breast cancer in 2003 (211,300 in women and 1,300 in men) and 313,600 estimated cases of cancers of the genital system (229,000 in men; 83,700 in women).

According to the ACS, 39,800 women will die from breast cancer in 2003 (as will 400 men). A total of 56,300 Americans will die from cancer of the genital system (29,500 men and 26,800 women).

The annual statistics compiled by the ACS reveal two extremely important facts:

1. Out of 1,334,100 new cases of cancer that will occur in 2003, fully 526,500 will be cancers of the genital system and of the breast; and
2. Out of 556,500 expected cancer deaths, an estimated 96,400 will be from cancers of the genital system and breast

In other words, nearly 40% of all new cancer cases in the United States in 2003 will involve either the genital system or the breast in American men and women. And nearly 20% of all cancer deaths will be caused by cancers of the breast or genital systems.

There is no medical research into why this is happening. To me this is astounding, and has been for over one quarter of a century.

I first noticed this correlation in 1977 when I worked for the American Cancer Society on its clinical journal *Ca-A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. The percentage of new cancer cases and cancer deaths from these types of cancer has held relatively steady over the last 25 years, no matter what statistical methods the ACS was using at any given time.

I pointed out this statistical finding to fellow editors, physicians, and colleagues in other departments at the ACS. To my great surprise, I discovered that it meant little or nothing to them.

At the time, I sent query letters to editors at professional medical publications, as well as magazines for the public that covered health issues, suggesting that I write an article on the substantial cancer incidence and mortality from breast and genital system cancers and the lack of research into this phenomenon. To my even greater surprise, there was no interest whatsoever in publishing an article on these statistical correlations and the lack of investigation into it.

Interestingly, after I would inform the editors of the large percentage of cancers occurring at these sites, and explain that there was no research into why this was happening, editor after editor would ask, "Where's the story?" To which I would reply, "The high rates of new cancer cases, the high death rates from the cancers, and the lack of investigation into it — *that's the story!*"

During the 1980s and 1990s, I continued to attempt to interest editors, to no avail. Today's journalists show no more interest. In March 2003, I had an opportunity to discuss this subject with the producer of a major television news show. Even though this intelligent, savvy producer has had cancer, no interest was expressed in reporting the statistical facts or investigating the subject more deeply.

Imagine the uproar and outrage if it were discovered that 40% of new cancers and 20% of cancer deaths each year occurred in the brain or liver or kidneys but that the reasons for this were not being sought. It would not be tolerated by the public or the mass media.

But 525,600 new cancer cases and 96,400 cancer deaths in 2003 alone apparently are not of sufficient interest. Neither is there a desire to explore why there is a complete lack of investigation into the causes of this phenomenon.

The standard responses that "cancer is not one disease, but hundreds of diseases" or "the causes of cancer are multifactorial" or even a blanket response of "there is no connection" do not suffice. Why? Because no research has been done to support such an "explanation."

So the question stands, "What is the connection between the development of, and death from, cancer of the genital system and of the breast in women and men and present-day

human sexual functioning?”

A [subsequent article](#) will explore one attempt to answer that question.

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