

Cancer and Present-Day Human Sexual Functioning: What is the Connection? Part Two By Michael Mannion

“Reich's theory that cancer is not primarily a tumor that arises mysteriously in an otherwise healthy organism but a systemic disease due to chronic sexual starvation will startle the average person who tends to view a disturbance of sexuality as distressing but not pathogenic. It will also enrage many who, because of moral prejudice, find such a connection offensive and untenable.”

—Chester M. Raphael, MD in his Foreword to *The Cancer Biopathy* by Wilhelm Reich
In [part one](#) of this article, the 2003 annual statistics published by the American Cancer Society (ACS) were reviewed. The data 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 involved either the genital system or the breast in American men and women. And nearly 20% of all cancer deaths were caused by cancers of the breast or genital systems.

Why does cancer occur so frequently in these parts of the body? How is present-day human sexual functioning connected with the high incidence of morbidity and mortality from cancer that our society now experiences?

This article will look at the theory of the origin and nature of cancer put forward by the pioneering physician-scientist Wilhelm Reich in his 1948 book, *The Cancer Biopathy*. Cancer is one example of a type of disease Reich referred to as a “biopathy.” He wrote, “The term biopathies refers to all disease processes caused by a basic dysfunction of the autonomic life apparatus. Once started, this dysfunction can manifest itself in a variety of symptomatic disease processes.”

For Reich, the biopathic process can lead to cancer in some people, to cardiovascular disease in others, and to catatonic or paranoid schizophrenia in still others. He included some cases of angina pectoris, asthma, epilepsy, anxiety neurosis, multiple sclerosis, chorea and chronic alcoholism as other examples of biopathic disease. The term “biopathy” was used by Reich to describe a patient's condition only when “it is definite that the disease process begins with a disturbance of pulsation, no matter what secondary disease pattern results.”

To the mechanistic mind, it probably seems inconceivable that such different diseases can be related. What could be the common denominator of all of these diverse conditions? For Reich, it is *"a disturbance of the natural function of pulsation in the total organism."* In his view, the organism, in whole and in part, oscillates between *expansion* and *contraction*, with biological pulsation being indicative of healthy functioning. The heartbeat is a good example of this biological activity.

Many healing traditions from around the world—such as Ayurveda or Traditional Chinese Medicine—emphasize “balance” as integral to health. These and other healing traditions also refer to “energy” in the body. All of the ancient traditions of medicine, and many of the more recent approaches, such as homeopathy, recognize the existence of a life energy or life force in the organism. And all of these healing techniques emphasize the importance of the movement of the energy in the body for maintaining wellness and curing disease. The movement of energy in the body is believed to bring about a state of “energy balance.” The free movement of this vital energy is the foundation of good health. However, in these traditions, “energy” remains a concept, premise or principle, whether it be spiritual or philosophical.

For Reich, in contrast, the life energy (which he called orgone) is a physical energy that is demonstrable, measurable and usable. (See *The Cancer Biopathy*, Chapter 4, “The Objective Demonstration of Orgone Energy.”) He, too, recognized that a state of “energy balance” is essential to health. But for him, that “energy balance” comes about through the sexual act. It is the biophysical function of the orgasm to discharge the bioenergy that builds up in the body. Energy builds up in the body, is discharged through the orgasm, keeping the body in “balance.” Sexual dysfunction leads to being “out of balance.” And it can cause, not only emotional distress, but also, physical disease.

To Reich, sexual dysfunction, and the concomitant biological stasis of energy, is the single common denominator underlying the many manifestations of cancer. But the crucial relationship between impaired sexual functioning and energy stasis with diseases such as cancer are not addressed in most other healing traditions. For example, I have attended many excellent seminars on complementary approaches to health, and on integrating complementary and conventional approaches to cancer, and have never heard a single mention of the role of sexual function and dysfunction in health and disease. This was true whether the conference lasted for one-day or for one week.

Reich's thesis concerning cancer was stated clearly and succinctly in *The Cancer Biopathy*, *"Sexual stasis represents a functional disturbance of biological pulsation. Sexual excitation is a primal function of the living plasma system. The sexual function is demonstrably the productive life function per se. A chronic disturbance of this function must of necessity coincide with a biopathy."*

According to Reich, this disturbance is felt in two principal ways: (1) in an indirect manner as an emotional disturbance (i.e., neurosis or psychosis) or (2) directly as a functional organic disturbance (i.e., a physical disease). In either case, Reich wrote, *"The central mechanism of a biopathy is a disturbance in the discharge of biosexual excitation."* Physical,

chemical and emotional processes are all at play in biopathic conditions. Emotional factors are involved as well.

Reich's research focused on elucidating the true nature of the energy expressed in the orgasm. His findings and conclusions are presented in *The Discovery of the Orgone: Vol. 1, The Function of the Orgasm* and *Vol. 2, The Cancer Biopathy*. To comprehend Reich's theory of cancer, it is necessary to understand his findings concerning orgone energy. There are two major obstacles in the way to achieving this: (1) the mechanistic understanding of disease and (2) the incapacity of the average man and woman to perceive the movement of the orgone energy in his or her body.

Reich did not claim that a cure to cancer had been found. "I do not publish this book without serious concern," he wrote, "mainly that many readers of our literature will now assume that a cure for cancer has been found. This is not at all the case." In fact, he came to understand that *prevention, not cure, is the ultimate solution to cancer*. As Dr. Raphael wrote, "The means to this solution are to be found primarily in the social realm, for it is our repressive social order that creates the sexual misery and the resulting stagnation of biological energy from which cancer originates." It is more obvious than ever that humanity is suffering severely from sexual dysfunction. And cancer incidence and mortality increase dramatically with each passing year.

In the past, Reich's contribution to an understanding of cancer has been received with either blind rejection or silence. No major attempt has been made over the past 55-60 years to examine Reich's functional theory of the origin and development of cancer and other biopathic diseases, including treatment possibilities and the potential for *disease prevention*.

Today, the nature of cancer remains a mystery. Cancer treatment—whether conventional, complementary or integrative—is still largely symptomatic with unpredictable results. Reich remains ignored by the overwhelming majority of conventional, complementary and integrative physicians and health practitioners. This brief two-part article barely skims the surface of Reich's contribution in this area, providing only an inkling of the wealth of information contained in his book. It is time that fresh, open-minded scrutiny be given to the valuable insights offered by Reich in *The Cancer Biopathy*. It is needed more than ever.