

## A Critical Analysis of the Historical Concepts of Symmetry in Cancer Metastasis

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### ABSTRACT

A sound concept is that, in order to appreciate historical concepts, the antecedents should undergo research. Since historical notes were searched without avail, the present paper critically analyses the works of some medical masters. This has resulted in discarding historical looseness and enthroning the real meaning of symmetry in cancer metastasis.

**Keywords:** Cancer, symmetry, history, analysis, principles.

### INTRODUCTION

On good grounds, Macfarlane Burnet summarized that in order to appreciate the history of a subject, its antecedents must be subjected to research (1). An available such work, titled "Historical notes on cancer (2), did not mention symmetry in cancer metastasis. Therefore, the present paper examines the available old literature.

### HISTORICAL TEXTS

1. 1866 – Le Rossignol (3) discussed a case of acute symmetrical carcinoma. A servant girl aged 20 years was necropsied. The right breast weighed six ounces while the left weighed six ounces and half. The kidneys were much larger than usual and full of cancer but not weighed. Likewise, both ovaries "were cancerous, and much larger than normal, being about the size of large kidneys." Thus, the above concepts of "symmetry" merely pointed to both sidedness and not to exactness of measurement.
2. 1883 – Finlay (4) presented a gastric growth with wide diffusion of secondaries. Concerning such nodules, he stated, "The arrangement of the nodules was somewhat symmetrical on the two sides." However, in practice, the left adrenal gland "was enlarged and soft; its central part completely converted into white and soft cancer growth". However, "The right suprarenal was normal."

3. 1889 – Ormerod (5) discussed "Symmetrical carcinoma of both cerebral hemispheres." However, although there were whitish bilateral growths, "on the left side it is broader on section than in the right."
4. 1898 – Furnivall (6) described "symmetrical rodent ulcers of the face. In practice, the right side was "about the size of a sixpence" whereas the one on the left side was but "the size of a threepenny."
5. 1898 – Pigg (7) also painted the picture with regard to the groin. Whereas the left ulcer was "five inches long and about one inch in breadth," the right measured merely "about one third of an inch in diameter."

### DISCUSSION

Clearly, "symmetry" in those days merely referred to being found on both sides of the body, i.e., mere literality and not severity of the lesion. It is to be noted that the measurements, which I introduced in my own papers, were strictly those of comparison of lesions in both sides of the body such as the adrenal glands (8), kidneys (9) and brain (10). I am persuaded that the principles of cancer metastasis which I promoted were in favor not of transportation by the *blood* stream but by the *lymph* stream. Incidentally, this was what led to my biography appearance in 1968 in WORLD WHO'S WHO IN SCIENCE (11). In it, the cute entry was of my "emphasizing lymph rather than blood in its dissemination."

## CONCLUSION

Symmetry was a word used loosely by the medical masters of yester years to signify the mere appearance of lesions on both sides of the body. Today, both sides are compared with reference to such variables as size or weight in order that scientific principles can be founded.

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