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**Biology 1090, Human Biology**

**Taking Sides readings**

**Issue Number: 4**

**Title of Issue: Are We Winning the War on Cancer?**

John R Seffrin, the author of *Winning the War on Cancer: Public Health or Public Policy Challenge?* claims that we know more about cancer today than we ever have and that “we now know essentially what it will take to finish the job”. However, writer of *The War on Cancer: A Progress Report for Skeptics*, Reynold Spector, thinks that we are overestimating the power of our new smart drugs and cherry-picking at the progress made in the war on cancer. In other words, we are ignoring all the failures in development.

In my opinion, both articles have valid arguments and facts. John R. Seffrin displays the fact that if current trends persist, by 2020, the number of new cancer cases worldwide will grow to 15 million and the number of deaths will double to as many as 12 million. He also shows that tobacco will be responsible for killing 4.9 million people this year if we continue at a consistent rate. On the other hand, Reynold Spector points out some interesting pieces of information. First, he surprises readers by revealing the fact that cancer death rates have only decreased 5% since the year 1950. Secondly, he displays in Figure 1 that cancer accounts for 23.1% of all deaths and is the number 2 cause of death in the United States. After proposing recommendations for the way forward, Spencer thinks cancer deaths could be cut in half if his recommendations are followed. Of course this is just his opinion and has no evidence showing its truthfulness, but it is still optimistic. Opposing author, John R. Seffrin, thinks that if we fail to intervene or do the right things then cancer will become the leading cause of death in the United States by the year 2018. If we do take the correct actions, Seffrin believes we can eliminate cancer as a major health problem in the United States. Although these two authors are on opposite sides, they both seem to agree that the right precautions need to be taken as we move forward in this battle.

The only fallacy I found in Seffrin’s writing is when he says “For the first time, we know what it will take to win the war on cancer.” I believe this to be false because if we knew what it took then doctors, scientists, and other health officials all over the country would be on the same page with what steps need to be taken in the treatment/cure of cancer. Reynold Spector states, “Everyone agrees that meaningful prolongation of life, preferably complete surgical removal of the tumor and cure, is a high priority.” The only reason I found this statement to be false was for the simple fact that there are some people that would rather die of cancer than live a longer life with it. Other than these two things, I found no other real fallacies in these articles.

I have no reason to believe that either of these authors are biased, I think the both have separate arguments that are more similar than they even realize. With that being said, in the final analysis I believe that the author of the ‘No’ side, Reynold Spector, is the most empirical and correct in presenting his thesis in his article. After reviewing these articles I side with Spector because he provides a more factual-based article than Seffrin and develops his thesis more thoroughly. I think we are losing the war on cancer, but we still have a chance in decreasing cancer deaths if we take the correct precautions and steps.