



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Which Cancer Is The Deadliest?

(NAPSA)—Pancreatic cancer is “silent” and fast. It accounts for just two percent of all cancer diagnoses, but has been tantamount to a death sentence for many of the over 30,000 Americans who get it each year. While old books and brochures tell its victims to write their wills and say good-bye, there are new treatments that can save their lives.

“The formula that works best is experience plus repetition,” says Tufts/New England Medical Center’s Chief Surgeon, Dr. William Mackey. “It’s in your best interest to find a surgeon who is highly experienced in the treatment of pancreatic cancer and who sees patients with this disease on a very regular basis. Pancreatic cancer is clearly a disease best treated in a major academic medical center by a real pro, and Dr. Michael Steer has proven over many years that he is among the best there is in the treatment of this disease.”

Dr. Steer, vice chairman of surgery at Tufts, has devoted his clinical practice to the treatment of patients with pancreatic cancer and his research to discovering the basic mechanisms underlying pancreatic diseases. Dr. Steer has provided reprieves to dozens of pancreatic cancer patients every year, achieving a 20 percent cure rate for a tumor that chemotherapy can hardly touch.

Medical students are taught early in their careers, “Don’t mess with the pancreas.” This slipper-shaped gland is situated deep behind the stomach and is part of the digestive tract. It makes enzymes that aid in food digestion and produces insulin, which helps to regulate blood sugar levels. When a tumor grows inside the

pancreas, it can remain undetected until it obstructs the bile ducts or other nearby structures. In its early stages, pancreatic cancer is curable through surgery and adjunctive chemotherapy.

Dr. Steer routinely performs the traditional Whipple Operation—still the pancreatic cancer victim’s best hope for a cure. “The likelihood of getting the treatment that can save your life at a community hospital is almost nil,” he says. “This is one cancer for which the treatment outcome depends highly on the experience and expertise of the treating surgeon and subsequently of the cancer care team.”

In inexperienced hands, the surgery often leads to multiple complications, prolonging hospitalization and suffering, and delaying return to normal activities. If appropriately performed, surgery can result in patients’ surviving cancer-free for seven, nine or even twelve years after initial diagnosis and treatment.

New painless and noninvasive diagnostic studies allow you to be checked if you are having indigestion, loss of appetite, jaundice or weight loss—symptoms that should prompt suspicion for pancreatic cancer. If you are diagnosed as having pancreatic cancer, or if there is even a chance that your symptoms are related to pancreatic cancer, you should immediately seek treatment by a surgeon highly experienced and expert in its management.

For further information about this disease and its treatment, you may visit Dr. Steer’s Web site [www.pancreasdisease.com](http://www.pancreasdisease.com) or call the pancreatic diseases center at Tufts New England Medical Center (617) 636-9248.