

JIM C – HEALTH TERMS

MONDAY - 03/30/2009

In the United States and Canada, cancer ranks as the second leading cause of death, and it causes about 13% of all deaths.

HOW DID THE TERM “*CANCER*” ORIGINATE?

***Basics:* The human body is made up of billions of tiny cells that reproduce themselves by dividing. Through this normal process of cell division, the growth and repair of body tissue takes place.**

***Definition (Encarta):* More than 100 diseases characterized by excessive, uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells, which invade and destroy surrounding healthy tissues.**

***Online Etymology:* Old English, from Latin "a crab," later, "malignant tumor." Greek physician Galen, among others, noted similarity of crabs to some tumors with swollen veins.**

***Cause:* Sometimes normal cell growth goes wrong, and no one knows why a healthy cell becomes a cancer cell. Scientists do agree that people can get cancer by repeated long-term contact with one or more cancer-causing agents (carcinogens). Such agents include tobacco, sunlight, X-rays and certain chemicals that may be found in air, water, food, drugs and the workplace.**

***Conventional Wisdom:* Cancer = Uncontrolled killer cells**

***Moment of Zen:* 2/3 of those diagnosed with cancer live longer than 5 years; the sooner cancer is found and treated, the better.**