

The Cure Starts Now

By Keith Desserich, Author of "Notes Left Behind" (NY Times Bestseller)

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I've never known anyone that died from global warming. Not in my family, not in my circle of friends, not in my city and probably never will. Still, I know over 12 people who have died from cancer and 20 more that suffer from it.

In 2007 the World Health Organization (WHO) said that 150,000 people will die from global warming worldwide. In 2030, they expect this number to double. Conversely, the WHO says that nearly 7,000,000 are expected to die from cancer worldwide this year alone. And in 2020, they expect this number to increase by 50%. That means that in the next 25 years, there will be 4.2 million deaths from global warming while cancer will kill over 220.5 million people worldwide. That's nearly 53 times more deaths than global warming.

Politics don't matter. Regardless of what you may think about global warming, priorities matter. Whether you think that the ocean levels will rise or hurricanes will grow intensity, you can't argue with numbers. 1 out of 40,000 of your friends will die of global warming while 1 out of 400 will suffer from cancer just this year. One in three people will be diagnosed within their life. And within your own lifetime, you will no doubt know 70 more cancer victims. Worst yet, it is one of the only diseases that affects developing and industrial nations equally. Still we buy electric cars, conserve fuel and fund carbon credits. When was the last time you bought cancer credits?

I watch the news and wonder. What would our world be like if we truly gave cancer the attention it deserves? Would we finally save our father, our wife or maybe our child? Would we concentrate on a cure instead of symptoms? Or will you be the next one to wonder if you could have done more? As I write this today, world leaders are insisting that we spend hundreds of billions more on global warming. Only \$100 billion is currently on the table. Meanwhile our government proposed less than \$5 billion for a National Cancer Institute research budget in 2009. So while we spend \$1.3 million on prevention and research per casualty on global warming, we will spend less than \$715 dollars on prevention and research per casualty on cancer research. And then we wonder why we cannot win the war against cancer. Worst yet, the money we do spend is often misdirected in a political numbers game that ignores those rarer cancers that may offer us a vital chance of achieving a "homerun" cure for all cancers.

I don't presume to understand the effects of global warming or any other battle we face as a nation or as a world, but I do know that knowledge is the key to saving yet another child from death. Cancer is second only to cardiovascular diseases in global mortality, yet increasingly we seemed convinced to accept it as a condition of life rather than a preventable disease. And in many cases, cancer is unavoidable. With the exception of environmentally created cancers, the victims are both young and old and share no fault in their condition. Shouldn't we do more and shouldn't our dollars, our awareness

and our politics represent our priorities? Pick your political issue: global warming, the war – nothing is more important.

I never cared for politics – I only care for issues. And this is an issue we should care more about. Cancer isn't just a disease, it is a war and the casualties might be within our own family. I know this all too personally. I lost my daughter to cancer. It's time we give it the attention it deserves. That's the inconvenient truth.