

# **CANCER OF THE LARGE BOWEL**

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CLINICAL CANCER MONOGRAPHS  
Volume 4

# Cancer of the Large Bowel

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# Foreword

For the past generation the Birmingham Cancer Registry has been collecting statistics of cancer patients from the West Midlands, the largest region in the N.H.S. with a population of over 5 million. This collection has been meticulous and all cases have been analysed in detail; the scientific approach has produced valid data regarding the many aspects of malignant disease - diagnosis, clinical course, the results of treatment and the survival of the various subsets.

Over the years a number of Clinical Cancer Monographs have been published and have come to occupy an important place in the literature of malignant disease. This volume is the latest in the series and deals with cancer of the large bowel - colon, rectum and anus. It represents the combined experience of all the centres in the region; in all 50,083 cases have been included and studied over the course of more than a quarter of a century, from 1957 to 1985.

Cancer of the large bowel is one of the major cancers, responsible for more than 20,000 deaths per annum in this country. This review shows that there has been a steady increase in incidence in recent years in all four groups - colon and rectum in males and females. The overall 5 - year survival rate is 27.2% and in only half the patients is curative resections possible; these figures portray the general poor prognosis. The series is unselected and comprehensive, providing a factual picture of the incidence and natural history of the condition in the community, rather than the selected results obtained at special centres.

The study is retrospective but should not be devalued on this count as the basic scientific research into this large scale clinical study establishes the foundation of the biological nature of the condition and its response to treatment. Reviews of this dimension are just as important and valid as those of small selected groups of patients enjoying a high curability rate.

The statistical methodology and validation procedures fully justify the conclusions reached and the authors are to be congratulated on the clear presentation of histology, epidemiology, clinical course, results of treatment - both curative and palliative - and the survival figures. The prognostic factors discussed in the last chapter will be of lasting interest to clinicians dealing with this type of cancer.

Oliver Goldsmith said "The volume of nature is the book of knowledge"; this is an outstanding example and it gives me great pleasure to commend it.

Professor P. Gilroy Bevan,  
CBE, Ch.M, FRCS.

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### **From hospitals:**

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