

Foreword

Cancer engenders more fear and uncertainty than most other prevalent diseases. This may be due to the unpredictable nature of cancer and the fact that the disease is so closely associated with death. No one knows when cancer will strike, and the disease steals control over too many lives. Today, about one-third of all Norwegians get cancer, meaning that it affects all of us, either as a patient, close relative, friend or colleague.

Indeed, cancer touches many lives. Cancer patients, health care personnel, family, friends, employers and politicians must all deal with the disease from their own particular vantage points. We compiled this book to shed light on all these aspects, as we attempt to take the drama – but not the danger – out of cancer.

In the popular science tradition, this book discusses causes of and treatments, and presents some of the new inroads being made in cancer research. The book focuses on historical and curative aspects. One chapter deals with late effects that may develop after a cure is effected. We meet cancer patients and their friends and relatives in encounters that are moving and offer precious insight. People share their stories about living life with cancer, about their treatments and the personal cost of their cures, and about the hope and despair engendered by their contact with the public health service. The book reviews some of the cultural and philosophical aspects of cancer, and gives an overview of the history and traditions of the Norwegian Radium Hospital, an institution that celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2007.

International collaboration is more important than ever before in the world of science and medicine. Following the success of two Norwegian-language editions, we hope this English version will be of value to researchers, physicians and others in their contact with colleagues abroad.

The Radium Hospital placed no constraints whatsoever on the contributing authors or on us as editors. We were given absolutely free rein and were under no obligation to write a tribute to the institution. Quite to the contrary, neither the leadership of the Rikshospitalet-Radiumhospitalet Medical Centre, nor Jan Vincents Johannessen, director of the Radium Hospital Foundation, which provided financial support for this book, ever suggested that this be a memorial volume.

We extend our sincere thanks to our co-authors and to the translators. We are also grateful to commissioning editor Sirikit Lockert and publisher Marianne Brattland of Aschehoug Publishing House for their outstanding collaboration on this book.

Oslo, 28 January 2008



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