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Review of: Preventing and Controlling Cancer in North America: A Cross- Cultural Perspective (Diane Weiner, ed.)

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Preventing and Controlling Cancer in North America: A Cross-Cultural Perspective (Diane Weiner, ed., Praeger Publishers 1999). Illustrations, Introduction, Concluding Remarks, Bibliography, Index, About the Contributors. ISBN 0-275-96180-X [245 pp. \$72.50 Hardbound, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881.]

Preventing and Controlling Cancer in North America: A Cross-Cultural Perspective is a compilation of articles that discuss how different North American cultures view cancer. The editor showcases “the multiple ways in which people, both lay and professional, create and enact their own cultures and subcultures of cancer.”¹ The book is divided into three sections: Part I — Cancer Beliefs and Behaviors, Part II — Interventions in Review, and Part III — New Strategies for Cancer Research.

Part I discusses how most cultures look for solutions to health problems that enable them to interpret and act on conditions of health and illness that are linked to their own life experiences, relationships, and spirituality.² For example, the article, “*The Metastasis of Witchcraft: A Case Study of the Interrelationship between Traditional and Biomedical Models*” by Linda M. Hunt, introduces the reader to a Mexican family with a sick fourteen-year-old boy. The young boy, after having a foot ailment for two months, was brought to a hospital where he was diagnosed with a small-cell tumor in his foot. When the boy arrived at the hospital, his foot had a raging infection that was discharging pus and was infested with maggots. The article shows the young boy’s ailment from a medical and family’s perspective. The medical perspective was that the family was negligent in not bringing the boy to the hospital sooner. The family, not understanding cancer, relied on their belief system and came to the conclusion that a supernatural snake had entered the boy’s body. The family attempted to solve this unknown problem by substituting their religious beliefs for medical science because they could not comprehend the cellular mutations that cause cancer.³

¹ See *Preventing and Controlling Cancer in North America: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* 245 (Diane Weiner, ed., Praeger Publishers 1999).

² See *id.* at 220.

³ See *id.* at 28-29.

Part II reports that although cancer survival rates are increasing, certain ethnic and minority groups are experiencing a decrease in cancer survival rates. For example, Chapter 11, *Native American Cancer Survivors: Agents for Change*, reports that Native Americans have the poorest survival rate of any racial group in this country.⁴

Part III examines innovative research topics. The chapters are entitled: *Developing Culturally Competent Community-Based Interventions*, *Physical Activity and Cancer in Hispanic Populations: Is There a Relationship?*, and *Diet-Cancer Associations: Insights Offered by Native Americans*.

Overall, the book is a languid read, but does achieve its editor's objectives. The book cites authorities well and presents many charts and tables to assist the reader in completing a journey through this book. I recommend the book to anyone who ponders about the social, cultural, and behavioral aspects of cancer in North American cultures.

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⁴ See *id.* at 133.

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