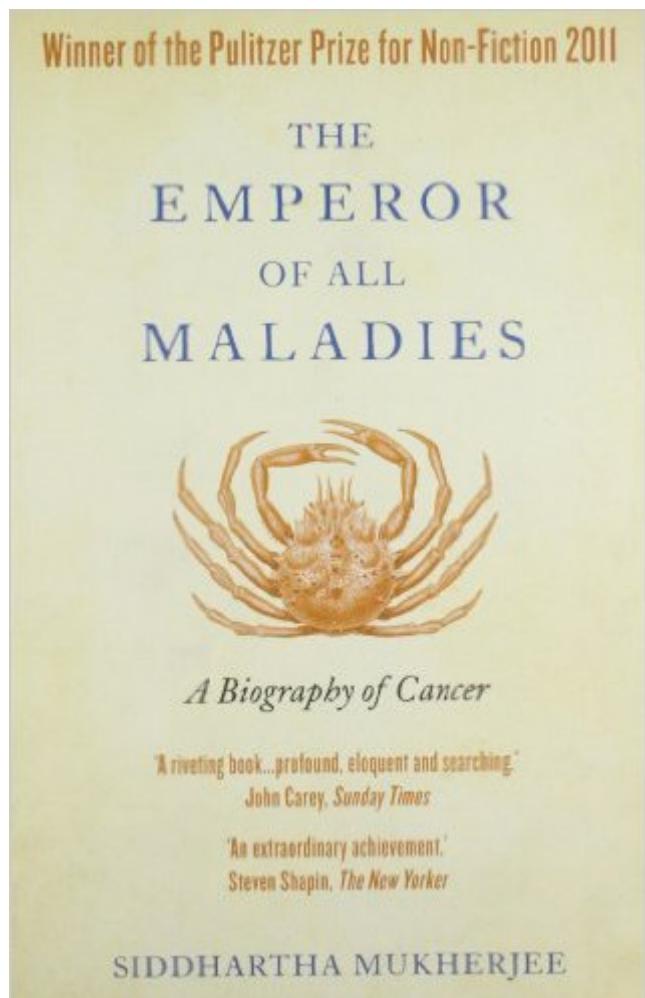


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# Emperor Of All Maladies: A Biography Of Cancer



## Synopsis

A comprehensive history of cancer - one of the greatest enemies of medical progress - and an insight into its effects and potential cures, by a leading expert on the illness. In *The Emperor of All Maladies*, Siddhartha Mukherjee, doctor, researcher and award-winning science writer, examines cancer with a cellular biologist's precision, a historian's perspective, and a biographer's passion. The result is an astonishingly lucid and eloquent chronicle of a disease humans have lived with - and perished from - for more than five thousand years. The story of cancer is a story of human ingenuity, resilience and perseverance, but also of hubris, arrogance and misperception, all leveraged against a disease that, just three decades ago, was thought to be easily vanquished in an all-out 'war against cancer'. *Emperor of All Maladies* is about the people who have soldiered through toxic, bruising, and draining regimes to survive and to increase the store of human knowledge. Riveting and magisterial, *The Emperor of All Maladies* provides a fascinating glimpse into the future of cancer treatments and a brilliant new perspective on the way doctors, scientists, philosophers and lay people have observed and understood the human body for millennia.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You remember the scene in the film "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid"? From the top of the bluff looking into the distance at dusk, Butch sees the lights of the pursuing posse which doesn't stop tracking them even at night and says "How many are following us? They're beginning to get on my nerves. Who are those guys?" In the same threatening way cancers have been dogging human beings since the dawn of time, and although we now know quite a lot about cancer we still don't

really know "who are those guys" or how to shake them. And they sure are "beginning to get on our nerves" as Butch said. Almost one out of four of us will eventually wrestle with cancer -- the defining illness of our generation -- and lose our lives in the process. Until it catches up with us most of us will try to ignore this fact, just as when we were very young children alone in our bedroom trying to go to sleep at night we tried to ignore the monster that we sometimes feared might be lurking in our bedroom closet. Enter oncologist Siddhartha Mukherjee who almost parentally takes us by the hand to give us the courage to open with him the door to that dark and foreboding closet in order to see what is really lurking inside. Since eventually most of us are going to have to wrestle with this monster anyway -- either as a victim or as a loved one of a victim -- looking intelligently and closely into that dark closet does diminish fear and enhance wise perspective. And on this incredible journey into the depths of that darkness, what an absolutely marvelous guide is this modern day Virgil called Siddharta Mukherjee as he leads us on this long and often harrowing journey through the swarth that cancer has cut through mankind throughout time. Mukherjee is a veritable kaleidoscope.

\*\*I am pleased that Dr. Mukherjee has won the Pulitzer prize in general non fiction for this book, 4-18-11 In the United States one in three women and one in two men will develop cancer in their lifetime. Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee, a medical oncologist, has written a definitive history of cancer. It may be one of the best medical books I have read. Complex but simple in terms of understanding. A timeline of a disease and those who waged the wars. In 1600 BC the first case of probable breast cancer was documented. In the thousands of years since, the Greek word, 'onkos', meaning mass or burden, has become the disease of our time. Cancer. The title of the book, is "a quote from a 19Th century physician" Dr Mukherjee had found inscribed in a library book that "cancer is the emperor of all maladies, the king of our terrors". As a health care professional and as a woman who is six years post breast cancer, Cancer has played a big part in my life. I used to walk by the Oncology clinic, and quicken my pace. I used to give chemotherapy to my patients, before it was discovered that the chemo was so toxic that it needed to be made under sterile conditions and given by professionals who specialized in Oncology. Dr Mukherjee, wisely discusses cancer in the context of patients, those of us who suffer. After all it is because of the patients, the people who have gone before us, who have contracted some form of cancer, they are the base of this science. Dr Mukherjee started his immersion in cancer medicine at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. He relates the beginning of the study of ALL, Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia, by Dr Sidney Farber in 1947. Dr Farber, a pathologist at the time decided to change his focus and start caring for patients.

Siddhartha Mukherjee's monumental "The Emperor of All Maladies" meticulously outlines the trajectory of cancer (derived from the Greek word "karkinos," meaning crab) over thousands of years, starting in ancient Egypt. In 2010, seven million people around the world will die of cancer. Many have experienced the horrors of this disease through personal experience. The author provides us with a global view of this "shape-shifting entity [that is] imbued with such metaphorical and political potency that it is often described as the definitive plague of our generation." In "The Emperor of All Maladies," we meet a variety of patients, doctors, scientists, and activists. We also hear the voices of such iconic figures as Susan Sontag, author of "Illness as Metaphor," and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose "Cancer Ward" is a desolate and isolating "medical gulag." Cancer is such a complex subject that it can only be understood by examining it in all of its facets: through myths, the anguish of its victims, and the untiring efforts of its adversaries, both past and present, some of whom were well-meaning but horribly misguided. Mukherjee says in his author's note that he has made an effort to be "simple but not simplistic." In this he has succeeded. Ancient physicians thought that such invisible forces as "miasmas" and "bad humors" caused cancers. Many years of experimentation, studies of human anatomy, laboratory work, and clinical trials have shown cancer to be a "pathology of excess" that originates from the uncontrolled growth of a single cell. Cancer is "unleashed by mutations--changes in DNA that specifically affect genes that incite unlimited cell growth." What treatment to use--surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or a combination of these approaches--is rarely an easy decision.

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