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PICTURES THE WORLD HAS WAITED FOR – 6-PAGE SPECIAL

Brad and Angie's pouting princess



TO MOST people with an ordinary attitude to health and exercise, watching Bob Galley (71) hit a squash ball is a shaming experience.

He picked up a knee injury decades ago and doesn't move around the court as quickly as he might but that's not surprising; he has been semi-retired for 10 years. But Bob's a tough competitor and when he hits the ball it's with the power of a man half his age.

Just how much of a fighter he is becomes clear when he recounts his battle with cancer – he abandoned chemotherapy, followed a controversial "mind-body" treatment

and survived.

Bob, who owned a successful insurance business in Charlotte, North Carolina, went for a checkup 33 years ago. He was told he had a lump in his groin.

Specialists diagnosed a "secondary undifferentiated carcinoma", which had spread to a lymph node. He was given a less than one per cent chance of survival.

He underwent some of the strongest chemotherapy available but the drugs wreaked havoc on his immune system. Each month he would suffer diarrhoea, nausea and loss of muscle control. Sometimes

He'd been given a less than one per cent chance of survival. He tried a controversial 'mind-body' therapy and 33 years later is still cancer-free

he couldn't extend his arm. Then after only a few days of feeling better it would be time for the next treatment.

Bob decided to pursue an alternative therapy instead. His decision terrified his family. Doctors said it might well kill him.

He flew to California to meet Dr Carl Simonton, a radiation oncologist and pioneer in mind-body medicine.

What he found there, he says, was hope.

"He taught me to relax," Bob says. "He showed me how the immune system works: how you could put a foreign object in the bloodstream, how the white cells would be alerted and how they would attack the invader. I was fascinated."

As well as offering counselling and nutrition advice Dr Simonton encouraged Bob to use visualisation techniques – to try to trigger his immune response with his mind.

Relaxed and convinced, Bob told his personal physician in Charlotte he wanted to start the Simonton therapy. In exchange for his doctor's support for his decision he agreed if his cancer relapsed he'd go back on chemo. The doctor agreed.

"Twice a day," he says, "I sit aside 20 minutes to visualise the cancer as a powerful invader, such as a snake or a spider or a creature from outer space or something, and see my body attacking it and winning the battle."

For the first six weeks there was no change. Then one day, he says, his doctor told him he could no longer feel a lump.

Bob was referred to a radiologist who confirmed he was clear of cancer.

Six weeks later Bob Galley was back on the squash court. Three months later he was playing at full speed. Thirty-three years later he remains cancer-free.

BOB'S is a true tale and a happy one – but taken on its own it's not the whole story.

Since Richard Nixon declared war on cancer in 1971 America has spent about \$50 billion on research and even more on cancer drugs. Yet it's estimated 570 000 Americans will die from the disease in 2006. And although American research and



Beating cancer with hope

medical progress ultimately benefit patients in South Africa too, the annual death rate from cancer is nearly 42 000 and 70 000 new cases are reported every year.

These days in America just under two-thirds of patients survive cancer after five years, up from about half 35 years ago. But look at the figures closely, as Fortune magazine did last year, and you discover in cancer that has metastasised (spread to another part of the body) as Bob Gilley's had the chances of surviving have scarcely improved at all.

An editorial concluded too much money is spent on drugs to shrink tumours and not enough on researching the process of metastasis that often leads to death.

Add to that the well-known side effects of chemotherapy and it's perhaps no surprise patients seek alternatives.

The Journal of the American Medical Association estimates by 2000 in America alone \$34 billion was spent on alternative medicine.

The medical director of Zakim Center for Integrative Therapies in Boston, Dr David Rosenthal, says cancer patients' quality of life can be "greatly enhanced" by therapies such as mind-body and exercise programmes, acupuncture, massage and Reiki (therapeutic touch) because they have a calming effect, often allowing patients to tolerate conventional care.

But that's still a long way from believing a patient should refuse chemo if a doctor recommends it.

Dr Rosenthal, also director of health services at Harvard University, is from the progressive wing of the medical establishment. If a patient wants to refuse chemotherapy he'll understand but on the basis of the evidence of benefit he'll try to persuade them they're making a mistake.

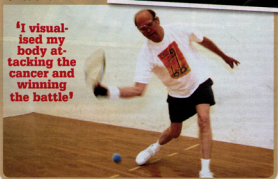
If a patient stops chemotherapy, follows another therapy and pulls through, Dr Rosenthal says the patient will often credit the alternative therapy for the improvement when it was the conventional care that helped.

But if patients believe conventional medicine has nothing to offer them any more doctors must shoulder some of the blame, Dr Rosenthal says.

RIGHT: Christina Pirello, seen here having make-up put on before a TV appearance, says she beat cancer the hard way by following a strict macrobiotic diet. **BELOW:** More than 33 years after he was diagnosed with cancer Bob Gilley is healthy and regularly plays squash.



'I visualised my body attacking the cancer and winning the battle'



MAIN PICTURE: Fred Eichhorn survived cancer of the pancreas 30 years ago. He subsequently developed a range of food supplements believing cancer is a reaction to dietary deficiencies. Interest in alternative therapies for cancer such as Eichhorn's is on the rise.

"Some patients are turned off by that first consultation with an oncologist. He says, 'Well, we're going to give you a 10 per cent chance'."

Patients may well decide if doctors seem too pessimistic they don't want to be under their care.

Dr Bernie Siegel, a former Yale University surgeon and something of a legend in the world of mind-body medicine, says doctors should see themselves as coaches, trying to bring out the best in every patient, rather than emphasising what may go wrong.

"I give patients my sermon: Do you want to be a survivor?" he says. "Statistics don't apply to individuals."

Patients who survive cancer may also benefit from their mental approach, he says. And in that Bob Gilley might not be alone.

TV CHEF Christina Pirello understands what it's like to be looking down the wrong end of a cancer statistic. When she was diagnosed at 26 with advanced acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) in 1983 she was told she had between six and nine

months to live. Her best chance, doctors said, was a bone marrow transplant, which she had a 40 per cent chance of surviving – with only a 50-50 chance of surviving more than five years after that.

Having seen her mother die painfully of colon cancer after radiation therapy and chemotherapy Christina refused the therapies and decided to go to her family in Italy to see out her final months in peace.

But something changed when a friend introduced her to Robert Pirello, her future husband. He gave her a book suggesting cancer could be fought through a strict macrobiotic diet. She committed herself to the diet completely, under doctor's supervision.

"She says she fought her cancer 'the hard way' and wouldn't recommend the path she took to everybody – but within two months her cancer was in remission. In 18 months it had disappeared. These days she says her passion for healthy eating is what drives her.

Or take Edgar Bartolucci, who felt left in no man's land after being

(Turn over)

Beating cancer with hope

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diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1994. He refused chemo because he'd seen his mother die from cancer after taking chemotherapy and found a doctor who offered a combination of unproven alternative therapies – from high doses of vitamins to shark's cartilage – plus acupuncture. Edgar has been cancer-free for 11 years.

And what about 10-month-old Sophia Gettino, diagnosed with a fast-growing tumour in 1997. Her parents, Jenny and Joe, were told she'd die in four to six weeks without chemotherapy. With it she'd die within a year.

Jenny turned to Dr Stanislaw Burzynski, a doctor prescribing an alternative therapy known as antineoplastons, derived from peptides in urine which, he says, act as "biochemical micro-switches" that "turn off" genes that cause cancerous cells to grow.

Baby Sophia received 20 hours of intravenous antineoplastons every day for five years, all administered at home.

Although a scan after eight weeks showed the tumour had grown, subsequent scans showed remission. The treatment continued until Sophia was seven years old, when the second of two scans showed she'd beaten the disease.

Today Sophia needs therapy to help her with movement, including writing. But she's a happy, sensitive and cancer-free nine-year-old who's doing well in school.

All four tales of survival are remarkable – but even so you'd look hard to find doctors prepared to change their practice as a result of any of them.



ABOVE: Edgar Bartolucci has been free of cancer for 11 years even though he refused chemotherapy for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. **RIGHT:** Carla Shuford's left leg was amputated in 1968 because of bone cancer before she went on the strict Gerson therapy. Now she swims 30 lengths each morning.



"Sometimes people don't realise the plural of 'anecdote' isn't 'evidence'," Dr Rosenthal says. Like most doctors he wouldn't dream of prescribing a drug unless a clinical trial had demonstrated its safety and efficacy. Evidence, after all, is the founding stone of Western medicine.

Alternative therapies such as vitamin supplements, herbs and dietary regimes have generally not been studied in the same way. The fault appears to lie on both sides: the pharmaceutical industry for mainly sponsoring trials of patentable drugs that can show profit, and alternative therapists for failing to keep adequate records of their work.

But patients don't see themselves as anecdotes, still less as statistics that go to build up a body of evidence. And there's little evidence anyway to explain cases of recovery

where conventional therapy wasn't used – beyond, that is, the term "spontaneous remission".

That's something with which Dr Siegel in particular takes issue. He prefers the term "self-induced healing".

"My feeling is if physicians use that term we'd look at it differently. Spontaneous remission means you had a miracle."

Self-induced healing is an attractive idea and even if it's unproven there can be little doubt that for Bob Gilley and others hope was a helpful part of the road to health.

HOPE was one thing Susan Silberstein didn't have much of in 1976. She was a young mother when her husband was diagnosed with a rare spinal tumour and told no available treatment could save his life.

Susan researched alternative therapies and called clinics around the world but with her husband in hospital all the time they weren't able to try any of them.

"When he died on schedule a year later he left me with a broken heart and two babies – but I had a burning desire to make a difference."

Susan set up the Center for Advancement in Cancer Education (www.beatcancer.org), a counselling service that aims to tell patients (more than 26 000 in 30 years) about alternative and complementary therapies when all hope seems lost. She spends half her time educating

'Sometimes people don't realise the plural of anecdote isn't evidence'



LEFT: When she was 10 months old Sophia Gettino's parents were told she would die in four to six weeks without chemotherapy. Instead she was given antineoplastic treatment and today she's a cancer-free nine-year-old.



patients about cancer prevention and the other half discussing patients' options.

She says she's most optimistic when a patient "is looking to repair every organ, system and gland in the body without interfering with toxic treatments" – in other words, seeking to avoid chemotherapy or radiation. She recognises she isn't a doctor and doesn't tell patients what to do. Her centre doesn't charge for its service and relies on charitable donations to survive.

In a few cases, Susan says, she has tried to dissuade patients from following alternative therapies strictly. She tells of one patient who had a large breast tumour who wished to pursue only alternative treatment.

"I told her, 'You have a tumour you've been ignoring for a long time. If you agree to have surgery you'll debulk most of the disease in a matter of hours and give your immune system a chance to fight off the rest with our help'."

"She fought me and I fought me. By the time she realised this thing had eaten up most of her breast it was too late for my advice to be valuable because they couldn't operate any more. And she died."

Part of the problem is alternative therapy and conventional medicine have grown so far apart one side's rhetoric is all many patients hear.

PROBABLY the longest-running controversy is that surrounding the

Gerson therapy, a nutrition-based approach to cancer developed by Dr Max Gerson in the '30s.

Treatment at the Gerson Institute in Tijuana, Mexico, costs \$5 500 a week, although patients may also pursue the therapy at home at a lower cost if supported by a Gerson-trained caretaker.

Gerson therapy involves a tough nutritional regime – 13 glasses of juiced organic fruit and vegetables a day – plus coffee enemas and liver enzyme pills. Gerson believed the fruit and vegetables replenished the body's nutrients and the enemas helped the body to excrete cancer-causing toxins. The liver enzyme pills replace purged calves' liver – discontinued in 1989 after bacterial contamination was thought to have led to the deaths of several patients a decade earlier.

In 1958 Carla Shulford from North Carolina, then aged 15, was diagnosed with bone cancer in her leg, which had spread to her lymph system. Doctors at the Sloan-Kettering cancer centre in New York told her they could buy her six more months by amputating her leg from the hip.

Even as she was having the amputation her mother was visiting Dr Gerson in his New York offices. There she bought a juicer with which she would begin the therapy at home.

Caring for Carla soon became a full-time job. "It was so laborious," she says, "because the juice in that day was like a huge car jack."

So many organic vegetables were needed the Shulfords began assigning local farmers to supply each product – one would provide the carrots, another the lettuce and so on. "It took a crate of lettuce every day to get the juice from it. So the community became involved in my recovery," Carla says.

Her prognosis remained grim for a long time but slowly the cancer disappeared from her body. She has now outlived her hospital's 30-year follow-up survey.

She still lives on a diet of organic fruit, vegetables and whole grains. She remains adamant Max Gerson saved her life – although she admits she "can't prove absolutely 100 per cent it was the Gerson diet that worked".

(Turn over)

The moment that changed my life

In December 1984 Greg Anderson, a church organiser in California, was diagnosed with the biggest cancer killer of them all – stage 4 lung cancer that had spread through his lymph system – and told he had just 30 days to live.

He had already had one lung removed. Now, his doctor said, the "tiger was out of the cage" and his cancer had come "roaring back".

Then came an incident that was to change Greg's life: a moment spent watching his two-year-old daughter playing on the living room floor.

"I remember feeling a moment of fear and sadness and despair, all mixed together," he says.

"I thought, I'm not going to see her grow up. I remember getting out of my chair, swelling up with tears and running to the bathroom and weeping."

Paralysed with fear Greg made a desperate prayer to God for help – a prayer he believes was answered with a subtle change in his thinking as he began to work out what he needed to do to survive.

First Greg sought out survivors to learn how they had beaten cancer. Through them he turned to Dr Carl Simonton, the mind-body therapist who treated Bob Gilley, and remarkably beat his cancer. He has now been clear of cancer for almost 20 years.

Greg can't conclusively show it was the alternative therapy that cured him. He'd also gone through radiotherapy – although the chances of beating stage 4 lung cancer, with or without conventional therapy, were always slight.

But he believes his decision to dig deep and think positively about survival – together with a strict vegetarian diet – was the key.

Deciding to forgive others was another important turning point, he says, as he let go of feelings of resentment he'd built up over the years.

These days, as head of an organisation called the Cancer Recovery Foundation of America, Greg has published books on developing what he says are the attitudes necessary to recover from cancer: among them taking control of your treatment programme, putting faith in it and developing spiritually as you go through the process. To sum it up in Hollywood terms: you need to believe.

Cancer changed his life so much that looking back Greg thinks the negative responses he felt were almost from a different person. "That was a whole self-pity issue and not very productive."

Underneath it all though he's still human.

"You have days when you doubt. I was in so much pain at one point that in one moment I was afraid I was going to die and the next I was afraid I wouldn't die. I can only say my basic faith in God pulled me through."



ABOVE: Greg Anderson

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And there lies the problem. Most doctors would look at the fact Gerson therapy hasn't been proved effective and conclude it was a spontaneous remission.

Max's daughter Charlotte remains resolutely opposed to the medical establishment for not giving credence to her late father's views.

"We're not in a free country; we're living in a medical dictatorship," she says. "The public is becoming more and more aware doctors aren't helping them. They drug them and drug them and they get worse and worse, and sicker and sicker, and in cancer particularly they drug them to death and patients get miserable and suffer and die in agony."

She believes Western drugs are fundamentally toxic and therefore of no use in cancer treatment. Many doctors on the other hand reckon treatments such as the Gerson therapy offer false hope.

IS there any chance of common ground? Perhaps.

"Both sides are a problem," Dr Siegel says. "I read a lot of the alternative stuff. Some organisations are almost as bad as doctors: 'Doctors are terrible, don't have radiation, don't have an operation, they're mean and cruel and lie to you and are just interested in making money.' So it's hard to get together with people like that."

"There are times I'll write to some of these alternative groups and say, 'You know you're getting a little extreme in what you're telling people.'"

With regard to Gerson therapy, he adds, "What we need to do is sit down with the Gersons. Instead of having conflict and saying this is crazy, say, 'All right, let's do a controlled study. Let's see.'"

Partly thanks to the integrative therapy movement clinical trials into the effects of some alternative therapies are indeed under way.

In America for the Gonzalez regimen – a complex therapy involving pancreatic enzymes, diets, supplements and extracts of animal organs – one statistically insignificant study has shown superior survival rates for patients with pancreatic cancer. A larger study is under way. Two studies into shark's cartilage are continuing.

In Texas Dr Burzynski is recruiting patients for no fewer than 32 trials on the efficacy of antineoplastons in cancer and has agreed not to treat patients unless it's part of a clinical trial.

Dr Rosenthal, for his part, suggests the increased study of herbs could be a

fruitful area. "A lot of these therapies we're talking about – herbs, botanicals – have been used for centuries. Where do our best chemotherapeutic agents come from? They come from plants – so some of the things people are really trying to do now is answer the questions about standardisation of botanicals and herbs."

The "deconstruction" of herbs – working out what chemicals go to make up a traditional alternative remedy – is a major area of research, he says.

Dr Siegel, for his part, would welcome more research into the relationship between the mind and the body – and the impact faith and belief systems might have on a patient's care.

"I always say quantum physicists and astronomers don't have a problem with what they don't understand. The universe is beyond our explanation but we don't question it."

"If I had the money we wouldn't be in outer space – we'd be in inner space. To say" – he taps his head – "what the hell's going on in here? This intelligence, wisdom, how does it manage? It's an amazing thing. If that awe were part of medical education we'd see more things happening."

Bob Gilley would concur. "The only thing about me that was special was the belief system," he says. "I believed I could do it. It's amazing what human beings can do if they believe."

Not all patients are as plucky as Bob. But if alternative therapists and medical science can work more closely together perhaps it won't take another three decades of research to give people with advanced cancer the hope they need. □

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BELOW: Since her husband's death in 1977 Susan Silberstein has been offering a consulting service to cancer victims, informing them of alternative treatments.

