

# foreword

by Devra Davis

I'm a cancer orphan. Both my parents died from the disease that now affects almost one out of every two men and more than one in every three women in North America today.

I know what cancer looks and feels like. I have also come to know that much of the disease could have been prevented, if only we had paid attention to what some people have been warning for years.

In this book, Liz Armstrong, Guy Dauncey and Anne Wordsworth turn the dominant paradigm about cancer upside down. In North America, for years, the debate on the environmental causes of cancer has been whether there is sufficient proof to declare that any given substance causes our cancers. Risks are generally assessed one substance at a time, and only a small percentage of the hazardous substances that are part and parcel of our daily lives are tested. Obscure models using animals exposed to these substances are used to estimate their likely impact on humans.

The authors show us that this approach has not worked. They confirm the tragic and continuing saga of individuals, workers and communities whose continuing exposure to the risks of cancer has endangered their lives and those of their families, and killed far too many humans — and other living creatures.

The world is changing, and Canadians are at the center in two major roles. Prompted by engaged citizens, the provincial governments of Alberta, Quebec and Ontario have begun efforts to get rid of cancerous agents, and businesses are emerging to create greener, more efficient and less polluting products of all kinds.

The Canadian Cancer Society has spoken out against the use of 'cosmetic' pesticides and adopted the precautionary principle. California has produced a major report on Green Chemistry, linking the health impacts of toxic chemicals to the urgent need to develop a new approach.

Massachusetts has shown the way with toxics use reduction legislation that has helped hundreds of companies not just to clean up their act, but to prosper financially. Sweden has made a commitment to phase out all hazardous chemicals by 2020. President Jacques Chirac has called for candidates for the French national presidency to make public declarations of their intent to reduce the environmental burden on cancer.

This book sends an urgent wake-up call. It exposes some troubling episodes in public health where people have been denied the fundamental human right to know about the dangers that exist in their everyday world, and it provides copious evidence of policies, practices and principles that offer us the possibility of a far safer, healthier world, if we are willing to embrace them.

Some may be challenged by the passion of this book. Some may be uncomfortable with its tone, but no one can dispute the solid grounds on which it rests.

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