

Leukemia is a cancer that has had a significant effect on our society and with the developments of new drugs it may become treatable. Leukemia originates in the blood-forming organs which may include the lymph tissue and bone cells. In a person with leukemia the rate and the number of cells produced is altered. This altering can become fatal, or with proper treatment it can be subdued.

There are two main types of leukemia which include ³total² and ³differential.² These are mainly characterized by the appearance of white blood cells. When leukemia attacks the blood cells, the bone marrow (where blood cells are made), the spleen, and the lymph nodes are extremely weakened (Reagan 90). The classification of leukemia is based on what organ it is attacking. Leukemia can be in acute or chronic form, which means it can happen rapidly, or be prolonged and severe (Bourne 996). To diagnose leukemia doctors have to insert a needle into the bone marrow to extract it and then then view it under a microscope to see if it has any abnormalities that relate to that of leukemia. Some of the symptoms that are involved with leukemia include: lack of energy, fever, susceptibility to infection (because of lack of white blood cells), excessive or repetitive bleeding, easy bruising, and also enlargement of the liver, spleen and lymph nodes (997).

This disease has been known to cause about ³10% of all cancer deaths, about 50% of all cancer deaths in children and adults less than 30

years old, and at least 4 million people now living are expected to die from these forms of cancer (Reagan 1).² Over half of every type of leukemia occurs in people over the age of 60. Even though so many people have been getting different types of leukemia, the causes are not totally known. There is evidence that exposure to radiation can reduce the development of leukemia. Also, a genetic inheritance has been shown to be a factor in the incidences of leukemia and sometimes it is seen accompanying birth defects (Altman and Sarg 154).

With the problems that surround leukemia and the probability of death there are ways to treat it. Most of these treatments have only developed recently and are still undergoing testing. But a few drugs have been shown to produce a state in which the patients shows no sign of cancer. One of these drugs is 2-chlorodeoxyadenosine, which kills the bad white blood cells, but leaves the good. ³In 1990...patients treated with this new drug for just one week were in complete long-term remission (Weaver 29).² This long-term could very probably last forever until the patient dies and the leukemia reappears again. Another drug called DCF, when tested on patients, ³brought about complete remission in 104 of a 152 of them (Fackelmann 363).² Other researchers also noted that they would have to wait over 10 years to know for sure if the patients would have a relapse (363). In addition to these drugs, many other powerful drugs are used to remedy leukemia and, chemotherapy is also a treatment.

The two drugs mentioned before remain to be presently the closest thing to a cure for all types of leukemia.

In conclusion, leukemia is a cancer that has affected many people's lives and remains to be a frightening disorder that we have to deal with in the medical world. Fortunately, it looks like a hopeful future with the developments of new drugs. Maybe, with the increase in technology and new medicines we may someday surpass present day treatments and find a complete cure for leukemia.

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