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Preface

Cancer impacts all aspects of the patient’s life. Most cancer patients have special concerns about their physical appearance, self-esteem and sexual lives. Too often, health professionals focus their attention only on the disease process, its diagnosis and treatment. Often, it is the lack of information and an inability to communicate with cancer patients about these concerns which lead physicians and other health professionals to neglect important aspects of patient care. The 14th Annual San Francisco Cancer Symposium, held on March 23rd and 24th,
1979, was designed to increase understanding of patient concerns and to enhance the counseling skills of health professionals who care for cancer patients. The paper by keynote speaker, Leonard Derogatis, provides an overview and a theoretical framework for considering the issues of body image, self-esteem and sexuality in the individual with cancer. The following papers discuss ways in which different cancers and their medical and surgical management affect sexuality and self-image. Wendy Schain addresses the psychological and social consequences of ablative surgery, relating these to human developmental stages and the diverse sources of an individual’s self-esteem. James Kirkpatrick addresses these issues as they relate to the patient with a stoma, Thomas Curtis considers the problems of patients with head and neck cancer and their physical rehabilitation with reconstructive surgery; Hobart Sewell presents data from his study of women with pelvic genital cancer, Andrew von Eschenbach discusses sexual dysfunction in patients with prostate, testicular and penile cancer. Although most of the papers address the Symposium theme from the point of view of the adult patient, Jordan Wilbur's paper considers some treatment approaches which take into account the special problems adolescent cancer patients confront with respect to their sexual development, body image, and self-esteem. An objective of the Symposium was to increase understanding of patient concerns and to enhance the counseling skills of health professionals. Papers were presented by speakers with special expertise in the clinical application of behavioral science to the care of cancer patients. In separate papers, Robert Cantor and Joshua Golden place special emphasis on the importance of dealing with the marital relationship in helping the couple cope with cancer and the often debilitating and mutilating aspects of cancer treatment. Georgia Adams and Mary Ann Capone with Raphael Good, in two papers, provide specific techniques of sexual counseling. In addition, workshops and panels provided Symposium registrants with opportunities for open discussion with speakers and cancer patients, which are reported here, as well as opportunities to practice counseling skills. The Symposium closed with remarks by Mary S. Calderone. We are grateful for the partial support of the Symposium generously provided by Varian Associates.

Jerome M. Vaeth, MD
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Dedication
We have dedicated this Volume to Donald O. Roy who died June 24, 1979. Mr. Roy served as the first Chairman of the Board of Directors of the West Coast Cancer Foundation from March, 1976, to July, 1976. His leadership, imagination and kindness will be missed by his many friends.

Jerome M. Vaeth, MD