

Taking the fear factor out of cancer

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It is the second most deadly disease in the Western world and one of the most feared diagnoses a patient can face. Now, a new book penned by a Nottingham academic is aiming to improve our understanding of cancer so we can better deal with its often devastating consequences.

Cancer: A Beginner's Guide is the first book of its kind covering all of the issues related to the disease in a clear and straightforward way, rather than concentrating on just one particular scientific aspect.

The book was the brainchild of author Dr Paul Scotting, of the University of Nottingham's Institute Centre for Genetics and Genomics, who scoured bookshop shelves for such an introductory text on [cancer](#) for his medical students before realising that it didn't currently exist.

The book explores the science behind the disease and explores why some of us are more likely to develop it than others and is written with a general audience in mind, meaning it's an accessible read for anyone, from those suffering from cancer to people interested in it as a biological phenomenon.

Dr Scotting said: "Fear comes from a lack of knowledge. If we or someone we know suddenly has this disease and we don't understand the nature of the disease — and it is very different to any other disease — then it potentially makes their experience much more frightening. My personal feeling is that by understanding something I don't find it so scary and hopefully that's one thing that people will take from this book."

The book is published on November 1 and is due to be unveiled at a special book launch being held at Blackwells Bookshop in The University of Nottingham's Medical School at 5pm on Friday November 5.

Cancer is second only to heart disease as the most common fatal disease, killing one in four people in the West. It will touch all our lives either personally or as bystanders if friends and family are diagnosed with one of its different forms. Yet many of us do not fully understand what cancer really is.

Often, it is portrayed as an alien invader intent on destroying us from within. However, while organisms such as viruses like the superbug Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) feed on us for the good of their own kind, cancer is different: it arises from our own flesh and blood.

The cells of a cancer, which can increase in number to the point when we are eventually unable to fight them off, are our own cells. Cancers normally arise when, due to damage — mutations — to its genes, just one cell escapes the many controls that make it behave properly.

Dr Scotting's book looks at what goes wrong in rogue cells we call cancer, what causes these defects and how doctors are attempting to remove these wayward cells from our bodies.

Arguing that we are in a new age of understanding that will revolutionise the fight against cancer, it discusses cutting-edge developments and maps out the promising future strategies for its prevention, treatment and cure.

Dr Scotting added: "At the start of the 20th century, cancer had been studied for many hundreds of years but we had almost no understanding

of its nature. The German surgeon Paul Kraske said: 'We do not know any more about cancer than our grandfathers did'. I think it is safe to say that we now know a great deal more than our grandfathers, or even our fathers.

"There can be little doubt that the late 20th century saw unprecedented progress in cancer research and understanding and much improved therapies. An even greater rate of improvement is likely in the early decades of the 21st century. I hope that by reading this book people will not only develop a better understanding of what cancer is, why cancer happens and how treatment works but also a confidence that things are now better than ever before and will get better still."

More information: Cancer: A Beginner's Guide is published by Oneworld Publications and is priced at £12.99.

Provided by University of Nottingham

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