

IN EVERY ISSUE

Message from the Editor

BY DEBU TRIPATHY, MD

No longer cancer's safe haven.

Throughout history, the brain has held a revered place. Scientifically and medically, it is the center of our nervous system; culturally, it is our creativity; spiritually, our psyche; and in everyday life, our intellect.

No amount of discovery and knowledge will fully demystify the gray and white matter that governs everything from our moods and our movements to every sensory perception and memory, and even the beating of our hearts. We do not fully understand how some individuals with major injury or birth abnormalities of the brain can exhibit almost no problems, while a tiny stroke invisible by an MRI scan can have profound effects.

Yet there have been incredible advances in mapping out the circuitry of the brain and the biochemistry of emotion and behavior. Neurosurgery and radiosurgery can precisely address tumors or seizure triggers in the brain, while powerful medicines can ameliorate depression and schizophrenia.

It is easy to understand why cancers of the brain evoke so much fear and concern. In this issue, we attempt to lift the shroud—or at least take a peek—into the inner universe of the brain, and how brain tumors are found and treated in the modern era. Brain tumors pose unique challenges, but answers to these barriers are emerging.

We invite you to learn about a cancer that is not common, but unfortunately not rare, in “[A Better Way to the Brain](#)” by Nicole LeBrasseur. A brief lesson in anatomy, neurophysiology, medicine, compassion, and individual stories awaits you to cast light on the dark depths of the brain. We hope this inside look brings you closer to understanding the limitations and opportunities for those diagnosed with brain tumors.

I have learned that every cancer has its time—a phase when we really see movement in new therapies and survival. As a child, I remember my 8-year-old neighbor receiving a new regimen that put her leukemia into remission—a happy ending to what her family understood at the time was a rarely cured malignancy.

In my first year of medical school, a visiting professor proudly informed us about impressive advances using platinum drugs—treatment that within just a few years turned advanced testicular cancer into a highly curable disease. Over the course of my career, I witnessed a slow downturn in breast cancer mortality with various treatments.

Are we at the precipice of similar advances for brain tumors? As you will read, improvements are already in place, with more success in removing brain tumors and even treating unresectable tumors. But we have not yet hit the rapid inflection we would like to see, at least not yet. The really high-impact approaches may be around the corner; however, the future is hard to foresee in medicine, just as it is in politics, fashion, love, and war—all of which, by the way, originate from the brain.

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