



Not Just Another Day at the Beach

Decision-making and the Treatment of Malignant Melanoma

by
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Part I—What?!

Sitting in the waiting room at the dermatologist's office, Bill couldn't believe what he had just heard. How could this be happening to him? Sure, he sunburned easily and his hair was red, but he was an accountant! How could he have skin **cancer**?

When he had developed the sore on his chest a month ago, he had thought nothing of it. It looked kind of ugly, but it didn't hurt and it was small, so he just ignored it. His wife, Betty, however, was a bit concerned, given how easily he sunburned. After watching the "thing," as she referred to it, get larger over a period of a few weeks she pressured him to get it looked at.

He made an appointment with a dermatologist who ordered a **biopsy**, but told him not to worry, the test was just a precaution. That was two weeks ago. Today the doctor had told him that he had a **tumor**. He had just been diagnosed with **malignant melanoma**, a form of skin cancer.

All he could think was, "What am I going to do?"

Questions

Using the Internet, your textbook, or any other source you wish, complete the following tasks. Please *type* your definitions and questions and list your sources. Keep in mind what makes an Internet source valid.

1. Define in your own words each of the four terms displayed above in boldface.
2. List and briefly describe the stages of cancer.
3. List the risk factors for melanoma.
4. List five questions that our patient should ask his doctor before deciding on a treatment option. List five questions that the doctor should ask the patient. These questions should be your own.

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Part II—Two weeks later...

Two weeks later, Bill found himself in the same waiting room again. Dozens of questions ran through his mind. Why hadn't he thought of any of them when he was first diagnosed? He had called and asked about treatment options so he could make some kind of decision about what to do. He had lots of answers but the choices just weren't clear to him or Betty. If he did nothing at all, the cancer would kill him, but how could he figure out what treatment option would work the best? Would any of them work at all?

He still had one question, one that nobody could answer for sure: *What should he do?*

Questions

Now that you have had your questions answered and have a bit more information about melanoma, use the Internet, your textbook, or any other sources to answer the big question: *What should Bill do?*

To do that, you can start by answering these "smaller" questions:

1. What are the possible treatments for cancer? How do those treatments kill cancer cells? Which work well for melanoma?
2. Given what you now know about melanoma, what do *you* think Bill should do?

You must make a decision; no waffling. Write at least one page (typed) exploring Bill's options and explaining your reasons for deciding on a treatment. Make sure to explain why you arrived at your decision by discussing the treatment options available. Include a list of sources you consulted.