

Let's Talk About the C Word: From Cancer to Cures ^[1]

In this recently launched series called “Let’s Talk About the C Word: From Cancer to Cures” Dr. Susanne Schaffert, President of Novartis Oncology, speaks with leading experts and a cancer campaigner to discuss their perspectives on several challenging topics related to cancer.

New chapters will be released each month. We encourage you to follow along!

A Special Series Extension of Chapter 4

Advancements in science are accelerating at a rapid pace, opening doors for new types of tailored cancer treatments that are redefining the oncological landscape. In this extension of the C Word Chapter 4, President of Novartis Oncology Susanne Schaffert, PhD, discusses precision medicine with John Tsai, MD, Novartis Chief Medical Officer and Head of Global Drug Development, and Jay Bradner, MD, President of the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research.

[Video of The C Word Chapter 4: A Special Series Extension On Precision Medicine](#)

Chapter 4: Let’s Talk About Customizing Treatments Through Precision Medicine

In the fourth chapter of “Let’s Talk About The C Word: From Cancer to Cures,” the panelists discuss what precision medicine means for individuals living with cancer and for the future of oncology.

[Video of The C Word Chapter 4: Customizing Treatment Through Precision Medicine](#)

Chapter 3: Let's Talk About Courage

In the third chapter of “Let’s Talk About The C Word: From Cancer to Cures,” cancer campaigner Deborah James discusses her diagnosis, her journey with metastatic bowel cancer and why she's advocating for more education about cancer.

[Video of The C Word Chapter 3: Let's Talk About Courage \(Deborah's Story\)](#)

4 questions with Deborah James: Fighting Cancer and Advocating for

Education

1 - Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you came into this role as a cancer advocate and educator?



Absolutely. So, I'm the end user. I am a patient, I live – and I use that word very specifically – I live with metastatic bowel cancer. So, in terms of my background, I was an educator. I was a deputy head teacher of a secondary school, passionate about education. I was training to be a head teacher, about to take on my headship, and then I got totally and utterly blindsided at the age of 35, being told that I had metastatic cancer. I have BRAF metastatic cancer. By the time I was diagnosed, I had a large tumor in my bowel and eight tumors in my lungs. I was told that I probably wouldn't see out the year... and I'm alive four years later, which is quite amazing.

2 - Did you have any idea, prior to your cancer diagnosis, that anything was wrong? Were you experiencing any symptoms?

Yes, I had some symptoms, but I was that person who I thought ticked no boxes. I was a fit, vegetarian, working Mum who was just tired and had IBS, apparently. I was told that, being a mother of two, my symptoms were probably just stress, or that it could be celiac disease. Well, after six months, I decided to get a colonoscopy, which is when I found out that I have metastatic bowel cancer.

3 - What inspired you to use your time to advocate for education about cancer?

I think what inspired me was that I was an educated young female, but I still didn't have a clue about what cancer looked like. I thought it was something that happened to other people and couldn't happen to me. Well, I learned that it could happen to me, and it can happen to anyone. And more than that, I realized that actually, there's a massive need for educating, just on a different level, about cancer. Especially for colorectal or bowel cancer, because, as Dr. Michel Coleman said in our discussion, around one-third of bowel cancer diagnoses in the UK are classified as an emergency. And that number is even higher in younger people where it is much less readily suspected.

But also what inspires me is the research. I'm alive because of research. I have hope because of research. And being an educator, I thought that my story could be used to educate others, not only about the disease itself, but also about the brilliant science behind the treatments.

4 - When you hear the word cure in relation to cancer, what comes to mind for you?

Well, I think there's a lot of miseducation out there about what a cure might look like, or what living with cancer might look like. I think people assume that it is a very black and white outcome, that you are either cured or you die. But with modern medicine, we are seeing a lot of patients in a grey area. And sitting here, as a patient who will likely never be cured, I am very much in that grey area. And it is my hope that the more patients we see in this grey area, the more we will be able to change this narrative around the word cure. Then we can begin to look at it more like heart disease or diabetes, where it is about how you manage it. That requires education, and I'm very grateful to be able to take part in that education.

Chapter 2: Let's Talk About Care

In the second chapter of "Let's Talk About The C Word: From Cancer to Cures," the participants discuss the impact of bridging the divide in care for all patients, including those in clinical deserts.

[Video of The C Word Chapter 2: Let's Talk About Care](#)

Chapter 1: Let's Talk About Cure

In the first chapter of Let's Talk About the C Word: Cure, the participants examine what "cure" can really mean. Learn why they believe it isn't a black and white concept.

[Video of The C Word Chapter 1: Let's Talk About Cure](#)

“Let's Talk About the C Word” Series Overview

This documentary, which kicks off the series, shows Dr. Susanne Schaffert speaking with leading experts and a cancer campaigner for their perspectives and she dives deeper into what drives her work in the field of Oncology.

[Video of Let's Talk About The C Word: From Cancer to Cure \(A Documentary\)](#)

More on the participants:



Susanne Schaffert, PhD ^[2]

President of Novartis Oncology



Dr. Paul Farmer, MD, PhD

*Kolokotronis University Professor, Harvard Medical School
Chief, Division of Global Health Equity, Brigham and Women's Hospital
Co-founder and Chief Strategist, Partners In Health*



Deborah James

Broadcaster, Author, Cancer Campaigner



Dr. Michel Coleman, MD

*Professor of Epidemiology & Vital Statistics
Head of the Cancer Survival Group
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine*

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