

**New Haven Register**

## Five men and women tell the story of ‘Rethinking Cancer’

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Your world is turned upside down from a cancer diagnosis. You find a surgeon and an oncologist and you're told that surgery, followed by chemotherapy and radiation, are your best chances for survival.

That's all well and good, if that's the path you want to follow.

But there are other people out there who do it Ruth Sackman's way. From 1971, until her death at the age of 93 in December 2008, Ruth walked a different path, and many followed under the header of the Foundation for Advancement in Cancer Therapy. After losing a daughter who was treated for leukemia using conventional therapies, Ruth began an informational grapevine that connected people with materials and practitioners who promoted the body's own healing powers as a way to combat cancer and other diseases.

Richard Wormser, a Peabody Award-winning filmmaker from New Haven who teaches at the University of New Haven, has directed "Rethinking Cancer," a 57-minute educational documentary that examines the stories of five men and women who used nontoxic, bio-repair therapies to overcome different forms of cancer and Lyme disease, and who have been disease-free for 15 to 37 years. To state it in another way, these folks are claiming you are what you eat. Or, if you eat certain things, you can eliminate disease. So, since it's almost Christmas, and visions of shrimp scampi are floating around in my head, do you think I can eliminate my chubbiness by eating shrimp? Get it? Shrimp? I'm hardly a shrimp, but my new exercise program through the

Yale FIT clinical trial is going well so far. I'm sure I won't be saying that two or three weeks from now, when trainer Dana Brown turns up the speed on the treadmill.

But getting back to the documentary. FACT believes that nutrition- and detoxification-based methods can help the body to heal because chemo, for example, harms healthy as well as bad cells. I'm sure the medical community as a whole doesn't fully agree with this way of thinking, but people like Dr. Sheryl Leventhal, a former New York oncologist who now practices functional medicine, supports the viewpoint.

I was lucky enough to hook up with Richard, Dr. Sheryl and Jim Oakar, the vice president of FACT, when I was in New York City early last week. New York PR guy Sal Cataldi opened up his office to me so I could speak to them via phone when I was in the city for a friend's memorial service. Sal and his staff have been promoting the film for some time now. They're hoping it will have an impact on the medical community.

Now, I'm not saying that what the film espouses is right for everybody, but it's food for thought. That, according to Richard, is his goal. Speaking of food, the Asian chicken salad I had at The Eatery in Manhattan after the service was top-notch. Go there if you ever get a chance.

It took Richard and others about 2½ years to produce the documentary, and he said it had a psychological impact on him. "I began to change my eating habits. I bought a juicer," Richard said. He said he feels better when he adapts the regimen of carrot and apple juice and consumes lots of other fruits and vegetables.

Richard, the producer, director and/or writer of more than 100 documentaries and films, said the people who take the bio-repair route a la Ruth are "extraordinarily strong" psychologically. Any film is a trigger for change, he said, and "'Rethinking Cancer' made me open to alternative styles ... to be open. You may be one of the people it works for."

Jim Oakar of Manhattan has never had cancer, but he bonded with Ruth when they worked on a radio show years ago that promoted the tenets of FACT. "Ruth was definitely a leader when it came to concepts such as detoxification. She was very vocal. Before she passed, she was receiving calls from all over the world. She was very well known in New York City before anyone was thinking about alternative therapies."

These days, FACT is trying to have more of an on-line presence so that information is easily accessible to the public. It's trying to get the documentary out to film festivals and the alternative health circuit.

"We're taking everything we've had for 40 years and bring it to the public's eye free of charge. Our goal is really to educate the public about alternative cancer treatments ... We want to be a hub of information for people seeking other methods," Jim said. "Taking (people) to the optimum point of health is the goal. It should be a whole-body approach. An imbalance in the body created the malignancy ... We want to provide all the materials necessary to produce healthy cells and restore well-being."

As someone who practices functional medicine, Dr. Sheryl said she is trying to help people get to the root causes of why a body isn't functioning optimally. "We know the body can clean up microscopic disease. The way we eat, sleep and live can affect the ability of the body to fight off disease."

Those like me who suffer from dysfunctional lifestyles due to stress, poor diet and lack of sleep, could correct a whole slew of issues through proper diet, exercise and the ever-elusive sleep.

"We know a lot of chronic diseases are linked together. The missing link is the medical community that only has time to write prescriptions. I'm not anti-medicine. I try to get to the roots of problems and fix the roots," Dr. Sheryl said.

In the past, this column has talked about the healing powers of things like Reiki and visualization. If you want

to explore alternative therapies, read the book or watch the documentary of the same name, “Rethinking Cancer.” To find out more, visit [www.rethinkingcancer.org](http://www.rethinkingcancer.org) or [www.fact-ltd.org](http://www.fact-ltd.org).

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