

## Summary: How Do I Betray Thee? Ethical Journalism in Reporting Cancer

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- There are many examples of bad reporting in cancer.
- 'Holy grail' drug cure stories mislead because for most people cancer drugs are not curative.
- Cancer drugs have serious side effects, including major organ toxicity and death. Not reporting these is irresponsible.
- Bad reporting betrays people in various ways.
- Betraying those with cancer – by giving a false impression of the risk-benefits and ignoring the importance of cost.
- Betraying those who could benefit but cannot get access – by not giving those who do not have access a voice.
- Betraying people treated for cancer who may not need it – there are consequences to being treated as well as not being treated, and ignoring these means people can choose treatment that is marginally effective but has serious side effects.
- Betraying people who may get mental health problems or dementia (examples) - by receiving all of the attention it gets, cancer detracts from serious problems elsewhere, which do not then get as many resources as they would have.
- Betraying people who may get cancer – by focusing on high-tech solutions and ignoring the progress made with better care, better organisation, better data, which make a much bigger difference but receive far less attention.
- Betraying people with incurable cancers – by ignoring the quality of life people have to live once they are labelled as 'terminal'. Many cancer campaigns make people who are not going to be cured feel like they are a failure.
- A journalist's Hippocratic oath should be 'accept responsibility for the consequences of how you report'.