“What Can We Do About Cancer? The Most Vital and Insistent Question in the Medical World” (1913), by Samuel Hopkins Adams

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In 1913, journalist Samuel Adams published “What Can We Do About Cancer? The Most Vital and Insistent Question in the Medical World,” a piece that provided important insights into cancer awareness and detection. By addressing cancer as a public health issue, Adams aimed to educate the public about the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. He wrote that the article was prepared after consulting with physicians to gain their expert opinions on the matter.

Adams notes that cancer was a topic of great concern during the early 1900s. He mentions the role of medical professionals in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, emphasizing the importance of early detection. Adams argues that the lack of awareness about cancer was a significant issue that needed to be addressed.

In his introduction, Adams states that cancer is a disease that affects the body in various ways, and he outlines the need for early detection and treatment. He emphasizes the importance of increased scientific understanding of cancer and its connection to early warning signs and symptoms.

Adams acknowledges the need for public awareness and education about cancer. He writes that the physicians gave him a list of recommendations about how to detect and treat cancer. He states that those interviews and recommendations demonstrated insufficient knowledge among medical professionals.

Adams’ article discusses the prevalence of breast cancer as one of the most common types of cancer in women. He notes that women should be vigilant without undue worry and demand a competent physician to evaluate their symptoms before pain begins.

Adams’ work helped the US Congress pass the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act, which provided a legal framework for food and medication safety and encouraged accurate ingredient labeling in the US.

Sources:

In 1913, journalist Samuel Hopkins Adams published "What Can We Do About Cancer? The Most Vital and Insistent Question in the Medical World," hereafter "What Can We Do About Cancer," in Ladies' Home Journal. Cancer is a disease that is the result of abnormal cell division in different parts of the body, such as the breasts or the cervix. During that time, many women did not discuss or disclose early symptoms of reproductive cancers, such as breast lumps and abnormal vaginal discharge, out of shame or disgust. Thus, people often considered cancer to be a taboo topic. "What Can We Do About Cancer?" provides a representation of what people in the early 1900s thought to be the early warning signs of cancer in women. Although, as of 2021, researchers have made advancements that have increased the scientific understanding of cancer and how it develops, Adams' article provided women in the US during the 1900s with recommendations on early methods of cancer detection.