

An Oncologist Speaks Up for Lance!

At the conclusion of the 2001 Tour de France 2,146 mile bicycle race, many readers of the New York Times weighed in with their opinions of the 3 time and current champion Lance Armstrong.

Among those offering a viewpoint on miracle man Armstrong's achievement was one of medical oncology's own. OA thought you would enjoy this letter to the New York Times.

To the Sports Editor:

The Tour de France comes to a triumphant close after 20 stages, yet the accusations of drug abuse and scandal never cease. The latest swipe at Lance Armstrong's integrity by Jere Longman ("The Guilty and the Not-So-Innocent," July 29, 2001) uses innuendo and guilt by association to discredit his fine achievement.

If there is one thing I have learned in 23 years as a medical oncologist, it is that there is no dancing around the truth. Confronted with a diagnosis of metastatic cancer, Lance Armstrong surely learned this lesson quickly and well. His recovery from cancer is a testament to his ability to see that truth clearly, to weigh treatment options rationally and to work diligently toward a cure. His Tour victory is a testament to these same qualities and the training regime reported by Samuel Abt ("Training, Not Racing, Is What Gives Armstrong His Edge," July 29, 2001).

Armstrong has won three consecutive Tours de France. Despite his great talent, unmatched training and strength of character, certain journalists cannot accept that drugs were not part of the winning combination. We in the cancer community, patients and professionals alike, know that the only performance-enhancing medications he took were the chemotherapy drugs that helped save his life.

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