Cancer of the large intestine is the commonest cause of cancer death in North America. It is always uncommon amongst people who still live in a traditional manner in third world communities. Evidence points to it being primarily the result of environmental factors and consequently it must be considered potentially preventable. [The *SCIE* indicates that this paper has been cited over 345 times since 1971.]

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The paper cited was an attempt to show not only that large bowel cancer was more closely associated with the life-style characteristic of modern Western culture than is any other form of cancer, but also, that its geographical and socioeconomic distribution is very closely related to that of other characteristically Western diseases.

These observations indicate that large bowel tumours must be potentially preventable, could causative factors be identified and reduced or eradicated, and in addition that clues to their causation might be provided by studying other diseases that flourish in the same environment and might therefore share common causative factors.

Bowel cancer and its related diseases are uncommon throughout the third world and both there and in some Western countries have higher prevalences in urban than in rural communities.

The pattern of geographical distribution of bowel cancer is closely similar to that of diverticular disease of the colon. In fact, the latter has never been observed to be rare than rare until after a rise in incidence of largebowel cancer had occurred. On the other hand, the low incidence rates for these tumours routinely found in economically poor countries have never been shown to rise until after appendicitis, another disease of Western culture, becomes relatively common.