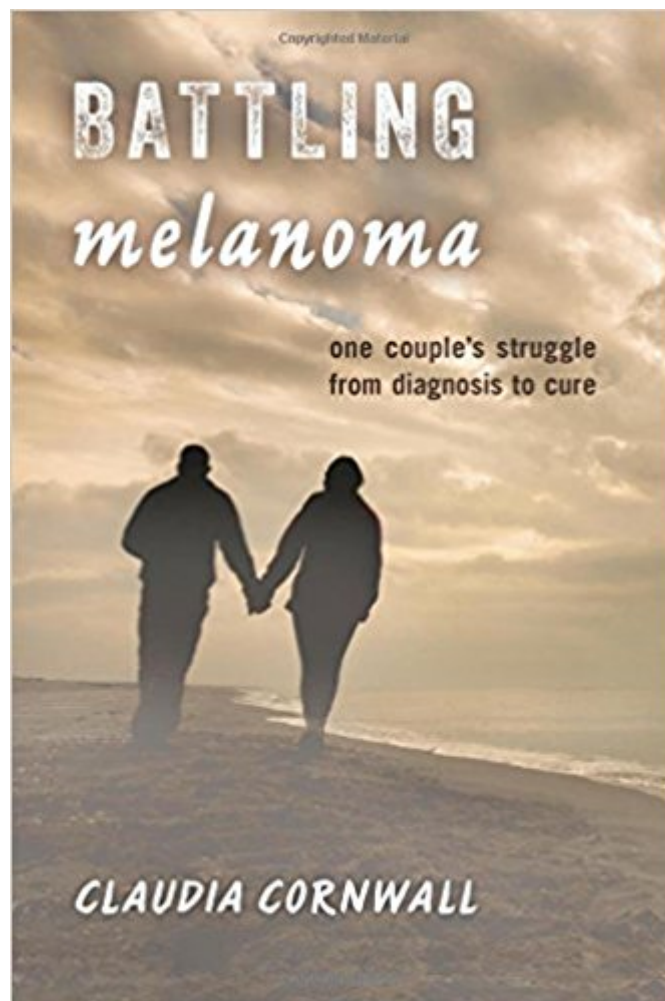




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# Battling Melanoma: One Couple's Struggle From Diagnosis To Cure



## Synopsis

In June 2013, Gordon Cornwall's melanoma went metastatic and spread to his brain. He and his wife, Claudia, thought it was "game-over." But his oncologist encouraged them to look for a clinical trial that might work for his form of melanoma. After embarking on a continent-wide search, they found a study in Texas with spots for just two more patients. They scrambled to get Gordon enrolled, and in August 2013, three days after he had his first infusion, he was astonished to see a lump on his shoulder softening and shrinking. Three months later, in November, a CT-scan revealed that all his tumors had disappeared. This story of one couple's battle to beat melanoma illustrates how a new treatment, immunotherapy, can defeat even aggressive forms of the disease. It also shows how patients can access the most advanced therapies by enrolling in clinical trials. Claudia describes Gordon's case and learns from conversations with eminent researchers. She paints a portrait of an illness that is difficult but not impossible to combat. With vivid firsthand accounts from their diaries, as well as Claudia's intimate narrative of the ups and downs of cancer treatment, this book will be a ready resource for melanoma patients and their families. It demonstrates how they can fight the disease medically as well as support each other emotionally and physically.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Claudia Cornwall's *Battling Melanoma* doesn't only take the reader through the emotional upheaval that can follow a diagnosis of cancer, in her words it "also demonstrates what

activist patients can do to help themselves." (BC

Booklook) (BC  
Melanoma is a cancer of the skin that is difficult to cure if not caught at an early stage. Canadian Cornwall shares her husband Gordon's struggle with malignant melanoma. Diagnosed in 2012, the tumor appeared as a pimply growth on his left arm and metastasized to other sites, including his brain. She describes the multiple doctors who treated him and their occasional differences in medical opinion. Cornwall concludes, "It seemed that no one person had a monopoly on the truth or the best course of action." She details the many scans, biopsies, and surgeries Gordon undergoes along with radiation treatment. Paramount is his participation in a clinical trial with an investigational immunotherapy drug which proves highly effective for Gordon and is later approved by the FDA. Cornwall paints the fight against cancer as truly a team effort. Worry and uncertainty accompany the disease, but standing in its way are the bulwarks hope and love. Cornwall's passionate account highlights the importance of diligence and persistence, hunches and luck. (Booklist) In Battling Melanoma, Cornwall, a freelance writer, intensely describes both her and her husband's journey through his diagnosis of melanoma. Told through both Canadian (primary and secondary care) and American (tertiary care) systems, Cornwall emphasizes the current push to achieve patient/family-centeredness and the need for patient engagement throughout a difficult diagnosis, even through sustained remission. During the narrative, the author discusses the experienced frustration, despair, and hope, as well as the need for participation in clinical trials for people with advanced cancers. Cornwall uses her and her husband's experience with melanoma to explore possible changes in cancer treatment, moving from chemotherapy to immunomodulation and eventually to other forms of biologic-based therapies. Throughout the work, the author offers information for patients and their families to assist with experiencing the full range of emotions when dealing with complicated diagnoses and treatments, as well as ultimately finding hope in what can seem like darkness. Prominently, the author discusses navigating between a universal health system with long waiting times and more limited resources (Canada), and a somewhat disjointed but resource rich and monetarily rationed health system (United States). Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and above; professionals. (CHOICE)

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Claudia Cornwall, a freelance writer for over 25 years, has written six books and many magazine articles. Her memoir, *Letter from Vienna: A Daughter Uncovers her Family's Jewish Past*, won a BC Book Prize for best non-fiction. Her biography, *At the World's Edge: Curt Lang's Vancouver, 1937-1998* was a finalist for the 2012 Vancouver Book Award. Her medical history, *Catching Cancer: The Quest for Its Viral and Bacterial Causes*, was selected by the American Library Association's publication, *Booklist*, as one of the best books of 2013 and short-listed for the Canadian Science Writers' Association Book Awards (2013). Claudia also teaches in Simon Fraser University's Writer's Studio.

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