

Noted filmmaker to feature cancer cluster families in documentary

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Filmmakers recently began interviewing area residents and officials for a documentary detailing the past, present and future of cancer.

Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns and his production team from Ark Media began preliminary interviews for "Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies." The six-hour PBS documentary is based on the 2010 Pulitzer Prize winning book of the same name.

Producers will attempt to capture the essence of the book while "...reshaping the way the public sees cancer and stripping away some of the fear and misunderstanding that has long surrounded it," according to the website.

Warren and Wendy Brown's daughter, Alexa, died of cancer in 2009. The two were interviewed for the documentary and asked questions about how childhood cancer affects families with young people. They also were asked about the alleged causes of the Eastern Sandusky Cancer Cluster.

Warren said his wife, Wendy, started reading "The Emperor of All Maladies" about a month before they knew filmmakers were coming to Clyde to interview them for the documentary.

"I think it's a great thing," said Warren of the documentary. "We're encouraged that they're doing it. The more emphasis we can bring to help those in power fund cancer research, the better off we'll be."

Documentary co-producer Jamila Ephron reached out to Sandusky County Health Commissioner David Pollick for a preliminary interview in September. Pollick agreed, citing the need for a public official directly involved in the investigation to give a firsthand perspective of how events unfolded.

"A lot of effort went into trying to establish the cause of the cluster," Pollick said. "Somebody needs to do the chronology for them so they know what was done in regard to the cancer cluster.

"It's also the right thing to do," he added. "A day doesn't go by when I don't think about this."

The documentary is broken down into three two-hour segments. The first part tells the story of the doctors, researchers and patients that pushed the boundaries of cancer knowledge in the past. The second profiles cancer patients, their relationships with others and the strength they find to live with the disease. The final portion looks at the future of cancer research and the future of scientific research in the field.

Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee wrote "The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer" and will work with Burns and Director Barak Goodman on the project.

The documentary is scheduled for release in spring 2015. For information, visit www.emperorofallmaladies.org.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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