

# Some live more downstream than others essay sample

[Health & Medicine](#), [Cancer](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

It is easy to “go with the flow,” so to speak. Don’t argue, don’t mess things up, and don’t disturb everyone else. That is the way we have been raised and is a point raised in Jim Tarters essay, “Some Live More Downstream than Others.” But by doing this, are we allowing critical issues to go unnoticed? In his essay, Jim Tarter raises the highly sensitive question about cancer vs. environment. Are they connected? Should they be considered on the same playing field? environment. Are they connected? Should they be considered on the same playing field?

Jim Tarter, a cancer survivor, comes from a family riddled with cancer victims and survivors. And when Tarters sister Karen was diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer, Tarter decided to use his past fight with cancer to try and discover more about the dark mystery surrounding cancer. During his research, Tarter came to the conclusion that cancer is not just a genetics issue but also an environmental issue. That cancer development rates are significantly higher in areas of high pollution, chemicals and waste production and disposal. An interesting point that Tarter brought up was that we as a society tend to look to the present moment, the case by case problems, patient by patient. How can we cure this patient? What needs to be done for this patient? But maybe we should be looking to what may be the source of the problem instead.

After a 4 year struggle with ovarian cancer, Karen died. During her last 6 months of life Tarter had been her care taker. Throughout those 6 months, Tarter received a book from a friend called Living downstream Sandra Streingrabber. One of the quotes from that book that stuck out to Tarter was how Streingrabber talks about how there is a need for a more upstream

focus with cancer. She states "...So preoccupied were these heroic villagers with rescue and treatment that they never thought to look upstream to see who was pushing the victims in (825 Streinbrabber). This passage sends a clear message about how we may be so preoccupied with the present moment that we fail to see the bigger picture of the issue at hand.

Another aspect that Tarter found in Steingraber's writing was the idea that Karen might be a victim not a mere accident. Maybe the toxins in our environment and our constant exposure to pollutants played a role in Karen's premature death. Tarter believes that there are so many layers of silence in today's society that we are too afraid to contemplate the seriousness of the issue and its frightening reality. Tarter starts to direct his readers to the question that maybe some people more at risk than others. Maybe cancer is not just a genetic problem. Maybe things in the environment are more to blame than we realize. Tarter quotes Steinberger constantly throughout the essay and here Steingraber states, " although the research is not totally conclusive, and much work remains to be done, so much of the information indicates danger now, and that we cannot ignore environmental links to cancer just because some uncertainties remain (827 Steingraber).

Steingraber also subtly points to the idea that the primary sources of cancer are possibly are of environmental origin. She also uses her own personal experience with cancer as a way to make it more personable.

Tarter then forces us to look at our own ecological roots. Tarter recalls parts of his childhood and how they grew up near the dumps and factories of Saginaw. He states " it always smelled like metal, oil and dead fish. The few

fish we found us dead suckers and carp.” He recalls that no one told them not to play near the polluted river. No one warned them about the risk, despite the enormous amount of deformities, cancers, and extinction of wildlife. Throughout Tarter essay, there are clear connections between human health and the environment. Tarter also points to Steingraber’s connection that environmental issues are linked to issues of social injustice. Through his cancer experience, Tarter believed that we should not separate class, race and gender from the problems associated with our environment. Can Cancer serve as a bridge between the issues of the environment and different types of environmentalists? Is there enough connection for these issues to be seriously considered by today’s “downstream” society?