



The bold pioneers who are fighting back against cancer

With the terrible statistic that cancer will affect one in four of us in the UK, it's unsurprising that TV documentary-makers are investigating the subject constantly. However, **Cutting Edge: Curing Cancer** (Channel 4) proved to offer something very different, focusing on four patients trialling new techniques to combat the disease.

The tone was starkly new. You might think a guitar-heavy soundtrack would jar in a film about such a serious issue, but then this was the rarest of televisual feats: an optimistic documentary about cancer.

Every cutaway featured another bit of kit: a sophisticated scanning machine or a real-time image from inside a patient's lung. The message was obvious, and indeed spoken by one of the patients at the start: with all this progress, "we can beat cancer or live with it".

At times, it was even jolly. Told he had tested negative for prostate cancer after an anxious few weeks, Jeffery Sugarman, one of the patients, promised: "I won't go out now and get hit by a bus." And there was much chuckling over whether his NHS tea should more properly be called "builder's" or "doctor's".

Rightly, the fascinating scientific breakthroughs were allowed to dominate. Most remarkable was Debra Cox, whose lung tumours were tackled using microwaves. I watched in disbelief as a needle penetrated her lungs to reach the tumours – as she lay in the operating theatre, awake and breathing normally. Searching for an analogy to sum up the obvious skill involved, her surgeon, Dr Rowland Illing, eventually said: "It's like trying to put a knitting needle through a marble".

Subtle direction by Brian Woods didn't overlook the patients' emotional journeys. Cox was followed from the beginning – admitting her nerves as she waited for her first appointment with a new consultant – to the end, embracing her husband and crying with the relief of successful treatment.

Of course, the doctors didn't have all the answers. It was upsetting to see the family's delight as a new drug appeared to work on 73-year-old Dennis Hadley's lymphoma, only for it to return a short while later. Even then, he remained optimistic about his chemotherapy.

For one hour, at least, hope about the future of cancer treatment finally triumphed over our fears.



A remarkable breakthrough: Dr Rowland Illing with lung cancer patient Debra Cox

New blood is the *raison d'être* of **The Apprentice** (BBC One). It is ironic, then, that what the format most needs now is its own apprentice: someone – *anyone* – with a fresh idea. For the second episode not only echoed the arc of Tuesday's first instalment, but that of every single episode ever made.

At times, it felt like I was watching a repeat. There was the same fleet of black cars ferrying the wannabes about, the same lingering shots of steel and glass City landmarks, and the same soundtrack to inject tension where none exists.

At least the series opener had the benefit of the candidates' excruciating introductions, in which they variously described themselves in the third person. It also featured a sales task – about selling real products to real people, on the street – unlike this second episode, when they pitched an imaginary new product to wholesalers, which always lacks the immediacy of real money changing hands.

Here, the cameras spent even less time following the task (to design "wearable" technology, like Apple's new watch) and more time in the boardroom. That meant

we hardly saw any of the candidates during the task, so we weren't invested in their fortunes once they reached the firing line.

In the end, Robert Goodwin was fired after "bottling" Lord Sugar's distinct suggestion he ought to be project manager. And, one suspected, for being too fond of "edgy" Shoreditch for the boss's rough-and-ready brand of business.

Still, some good lines were uttered during the tasks. Katie Bulmer-Cooke asked, after the girls team had decided on *Tenacity* as their new name: "Are we 100 per cent sure on what it means?"

Best of all was Daniel Lassman, a "pub quiz company director", who emulated Gerald Ratner in telling prospective purchasers of his hideous sweatshirt that filmed passers-by: "I wouldn't wear this in public".

In a previous series, Lord Sugar imitably berated the teams for flogging "old tut". His producers need to be more careful to avoid the same charge themselves.

Cutting Edge: Curing Cancer ★★★★★
The Apprentice ★★