

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Z. T. Sowers, July 21, 1903, with transcript

File Surgical 4 Copied from Science, July 31, 1903. RADIUM AND CANCER. We are permitted to print the following letters: Baddeck, N.S., July 21, 1903. Dr. Z. T. Sowers, 1707 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D. C. Dear Dr. Sowers:

I understand from you that the Roentgen X-Rays, and the rays emitted by radium, have been found to have a marked curative effect upon external cancers, but that the effects upon deep seated cancers have not thus far proved satisfactory.

It has occurred to me that one reason for the unsatisfactory nature of these latter experiments arises from the fact that the rays have been applied externally, thus having to pass through healthy tissues of various depths in order to reach the cancerous matter.

The Crookes tube from which the Roentgen rays are emitted is of course too bulky to be admitted into the middle of a mass of cancer, but there is no reason why a tiny fragment of radium sealed up in a fine glass tube should not be inserted into the very heart of the cancer, thus acting directly upon the diseased material. Would it not be worth while making experiments along this line?

Yours sincerely, (Signed) ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL.