

television & radio

Good news about cancer? It was like sunlight

Andrew Billen TV review



Curing Cancer

Channel 4

★★★★☆

The Apprentice

BBC One

★★★★☆

After *My Last Summer*, whose very title predicted the punchline of its participants' diseases, we needed **Curing Cancer**. Brian Woods's film, adorned by trippily light-hearted music such as Colin Hay's *Waiting for My Real Life to Begin*, was the happiest documentary I have yet seen on the subject, an accentuation of the positive news coming out of cancer research at University College London told through the patients participating in its trials.

Not that an alternative title would have been *Cancer's Last Summer*. We are not there yet. As Rakesh Popat, the scientist conducting trials of an experimental drug, and his guinea pig Dennis agreed, on this subject there is no point in anything short of candour.

When we met Dennis, who had suffered from lymphoma for eight years, he had a tumour on his neck the size of a baby's fist. Within a fortnight of Dennis first taking the unlicensed drug, it had almost disappeared from sight. By nine weeks it had reduced by at least 70 per cent. Popat looked almost the more disappointed of the two when Dennis said he had found another small lump on his neck.

Within days, the trial was over and Dennis would be back on traditional chemotherapy, the blunderbuss, as it was described, of anti-cancer weapons. Popat touched him gently on his arm and said he was sorry. His job, he told the camera, was an emotional rollercoaster. He relied on friends, his wife, his colleagues and when things got really bad, which they did only infrequently, the pub.

The rest of the news was indeed good. Debra's secondary lung tumours were being cooked alive by tiny needles. Jeffery, whose notoriously misleading conventional prostate biopsy could not decide whether he had cancer or not, was revealed by template mapping to have been free of



Pioneers: surgeon Louise Dickinson and scientist Rakesh Popat

it all along. Pete did have prostate cancer but it was being treated with high-intensity ultrasound, like sunlight through a magnifying glass, explained his surgeon Louise Dickinson. It was working. And there were no side effects.

This gentle film — even its CGI graphics were somehow modest and unafrightening — was like sunlight itself. I just hope UCL's phone lines are not jammed this morning or, if they are, it is with people wanting to make a donation.

In the brash world of the immortals that is **The Apprentice** task two was to design and sell wearable technology. Predictably, Lord Sugar wasn't wearing any of it: not the girls' self-heating jacket with solar-panel epaulettes and jack to charge your mobile and certainly not the boys' sweater with a built-in video camera and neon "On Air" insignia, rightly dismissed by one retailer as "a bit Christmas jumper".

Robert, the arty-farty one from Tuesday, ducked Sugar's pointed hint that he should project manage such novelty and was fired even before his team hit Café Despair. Scott, the sinister Scotsman who got the job instead, followed him out. "Lord Sugar accused me of hiding. That is an accusation I take very seriously," he warned in the taxi to oblivion. It made me wonder. Can you claim unfair dismissal from *The Apprentice*? andrew.billen@thetimes.co.uk