

# A Fatal Inheritance How a Family Misfortune Revealed a Deadly Medical Mystery by Lawrence Ingrassia

A Fatal Inheritance: How a Family Misfortune Revealed a Deadly Medical Mystery

By: Lawrence Ingrassia

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Weaving his own moving family story with a sweeping history of cancer research, Lawrence Ingrassia delivers an intimate, gripping tale that sits at the intersection of memoir and medical thriller. Ingrassia lost his mother, two sisters, brother, and nephew to cancer—different cancers developing at different points throughout their lives. And while highly unusual, his family is not the only one to wonder whether their heartbreak is the result of unbelievable bad luck, or if there might be another explanation. Through meticulous research and riveting storytelling, Ingrassia takes us from the 1960s—when Dr. Frederick Pei Li and Dr. Joseph Fraumeni Jr. first met, not yet knowing that they would help make a groundbreaking discovery that would affect cancer patients for decades to come—to present day, as Ingrassia and countless others continue to unpack and build upon Li and Fraumeni’s initial discoveries, and to understand what this means for their families. In the face of seemingly unbearable loss, Ingrassia holds onto hope. He urges us to “fight like Charlie,” his nephew who battled cancer his entire life starting with a rare tumor in his cheek at the age of two—and to look toward the future, as gene sequencing, screening protocols, CRISPR gene editing, and other developing technologies may continue to extend lifespans and perhaps, one day, even offer cures.

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