

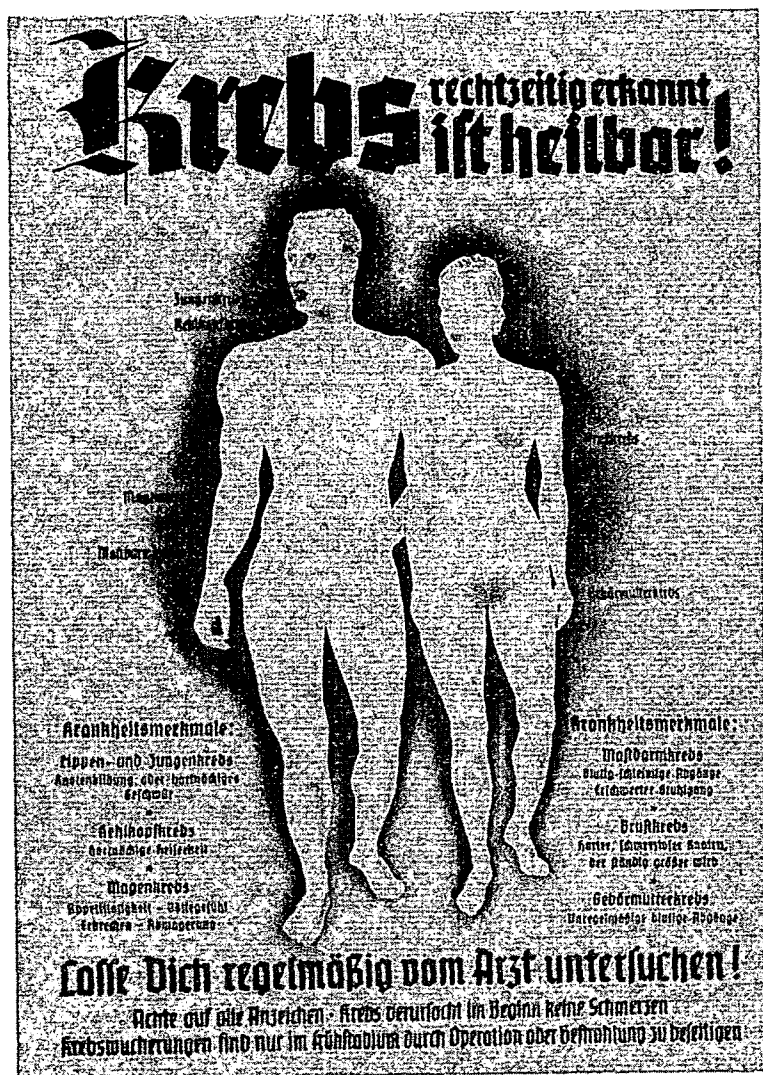


FIG. 1.2. "Cancer can be cured, if detected early!" The Nazis launched mass campaigns to encourage early screening; this poster gives some of the early warning signs for cancer and urges the public to consult their physicians regularly. Source: Friedrich Kortenhaus, "Krebs," in *Deutsches Gold: Gesundes Leben—Frohes Schaffen*, ed. Hans Reiter and Johannes Breger (Munich: Röhrig, 1942), p. 439.

to encourage early detection, sending 1,200 brochures to physicians, plus 1,100 copies of a handbill to midwives advertising the value of early detection. He also published a popular article, printed in every regional newspaper, alerting women to the early signs of the disease and the need for prompt diagnosis. Winter in 1933 celebrated his efforts as "the first organized campaign against cancer."⁷²

In the Nazi era, the propaganda designed to encourage (especially) women to consult their physicians was kicked up several notches. Radio and newspaper announcements urged women to submit to annual or even biannual cancer exams, while men were advised to check up on their colons as often as they would check out the engine of their car (see fig. 1.3). "Cancer counseling centers" were established in most German cities, both to popularize the value of early detection and to advise people with cancer of their therapeutic options.⁷³ Leaflets were also distributed to alert physicians to the value of early detection. Hans Auler helped produce a propaganda film stressing the value of early diagnosis and the curability of cancer; the film's very title (*Jeder Achte*) cautioned that "one in eight" Germans would eventually succumb to cancer⁷⁴—a rhetorical device Rachel Carson would later introduce to American readers.⁷⁵ Women were instructed in how to examine their own breasts for cancer (see fig. 1.4; Germans seem to have been the first in the world to take this step (American physicians would not issue comparable instructions until the 1960s).

Hundreds of thousands of women were probed for cancer in this period. In Königsberg alone, 25,000 women had submitted to such exams by 1942, which resulted in the discovery of 129 previously undetected cancers.⁷⁶ The massive propaganda for early detection subsided somewhat after 1938, the "peak year" for such propaganda by many accounts. The war put a damper on such efforts, though hopes remained bright in the eyes of some. In a 1942 article on "cancer campaigns of the future," gynecologist Georg Winter looked forward to a time when propaganda (*Aufklärung*) would be combined with mass screening. Radio propaganda was to play a key role, as was the example of the cured cancer patient ("a patient freed from cancer is a good propagandist"). Physicians