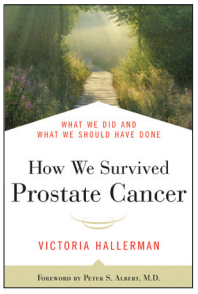
BOOKS

How We Survived Prostate Cancer: What We Did and What We Should Have Done. *Victoria Hallerman. New York, NY: Newmarket Press, 2009, softcover, 208 pages, $16.95.*



Prize-winning poet and professional writer Victoria Hallerman makes a significant contribution to the self-help literature on prostate cancer survivorship with her recent book, which is exquisitely written and highly informative. The text is an engaging account of a six-year period through which Hallerman and her husband, Dean, experienced prostate cancer diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing life as cancer survivors. The book succeeds in poignantly capturing these events from the multiple perspectives of the wife, the husband with prostate cancer, and their combined view as a couple. The book also includes a great deal of factual information about prostate cancer, its treatment, and coping resources.

The diverse content of *How We Survived Prostate Cancer* is distributed evenly throughout the narrative, including the main story of what happened from the wife's point of view, her husband's comments as covered in sections throughout titled "In Dean's Words," and what was learned in the "What We Know Now" sections. The appendixes are excellent resources on current treatment options, side effects of hormone therapy, "Dr. Peter Albert's Top Ten List for Prostate Cancer Patients and Their Partners," support groups and Web resources, and anticipated developments in prostate cancer research and treatment. The glossary and bibliography also will be very helpful to anyone seeking to make sense of the world of prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment for the first time.

Among the major lessons learned and discussed in depth is the importance of finding healthcare providers with whom one feels very comfortable, both in terms of interpersonal interaction and overall approach to treatment. In general, the reader is advised that the couple faced with recently diagnosed prostate cancer should go for a second and, perhaps, a third opinion and read as much as possible about the disease. Hallerman puts a high priority on finding a doctor who encourages the consideration of a wide range of treatment options. She also strongly suggests that the patient with prostate cancer should be accompanied by his partner or another support person when meeting with doctors to facilitate communication during the appointments and to assist in the later recall and interpretation of what happened and what was said. Searching the Internet for prostate cancer information and attending support groups are highly recommended. The book also provides much useful information on how to get started with such activities.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *How We Survived Prostate Cancer* is the comprehensive discussion of the impact that the disease and its treatment had on the couple's marriage and sexual relationship. Coping with the side effects of hormone therapy without a prior understanding of the details or extent of its effects was one of the most difficult challenges they faced. Hallerman makes a persuasive appeal for increased education and support for the patient receiving androgen ablation, as well as his intimate partner.

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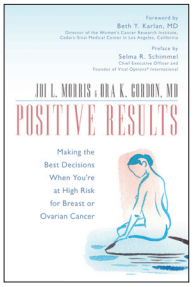
Positive Results: Making the Best Decisions When You're at High Risk for Breast or Ovarian Cancer. *Joi L. Morris and Ora K. Gordon. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010, softcover, 395 pages, $20.*



Positive Results is an important new book for women and men who are facing the presence of hereditary breast and ovarian cancer in their families. A combination of memoir and reference book, the authors successfully provide objective information and caring guidance for readers to realistically examine their risks and options related to the breast cancer genes. Morris, the first author, learned at age 42 that she has a genetic mutation on a gene known as *BRCA2*, beginning an extensive process of study and consultation leading to her difficult decision to undergo prophylactic mastectomies. The authors do not assume that everyone would make this decision. The emphasis of the book is on raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and empowering those at risk for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer to consider all of their options within a context of compassionate support.

The authors acknowledge the difficulty of coming up with the "right" decision regarding personal health surveillance, and they strongly encourage men and women to seek advice and opinions from their doctors. They stress that the right decision for one woman may not be for another. The authors conclude that, "The 'right' decision is the one that fits your life, your circumstances, and your risk tolerance. . . . It is the one that allows you to sleep at night."

Positive Results is organized in three sections: (a) assessing risk through genetic testing and family history, (b) understanding increased risk for cancer and management, and (c) decision making for increased risk. Every section has vignettes and quotations from Morris and the dozens of men and women interviewed. The book's humanity comes from the stories of Morris and other women and men who have made the tough decisions required to survive in this world of increased risk.

Part 1 describes genetics 101, in which the reader learns the fundamental concept of a gene and basic science terms such as DNA, chromosome, nucleotides, and polymorphism. The section goes through a scientific historical perspective that encompasses the Human Genome Project, the discovery of *BRCA1* and *BRCA2*, and the significance of mutations on the *BRCA* genes as a causative factor for cancer. Genetic counseling and testing are recommended for individuals who have a significant family history of cancers in their family. The book acknowledges that deciding whether to be tested or not can be difficult. Several personal stories of individuals who feared knowing their risk and how they overcame that apprehension are included. The book also discusses how to talk about cancer and gene mutation risk with children.

Part 2 involves understanding increased risk for cancer and management for *BRCA*-mutation carriers and those

who tested negative but may still be at increased risk based on familial history of cancer. Scenarios are reviewed with appropriate recommendations for surveillance. The section also reviews how women can lower their risk for cancer by making lifestyle modifications. A special chapter is dedicated to *BRCA*-positive men and how the genetic mutation increases risk for prostate, male breast, and pancreatic cancer.

Part 3 reviews the option of surveillance versus surgical management. The section on surveillance reviews all imaging studies available to date, as well as future options that are under research. All surgical management options available for women and breast reconstruction are reviewed in simplistic detail, with personalized stories from women who have opted for each particular intervention. The book also includes a glossary of terms and an appendix of other lesser-known genes associated with breast cancer risk.

The book accomplishes the fearful and daunting task of talking about breast and ovarian cancer risk, and it presents the complex information in a way that is easy to understand. Morris and Gordon found strength, knowledge, and determination in bringing forward the long-awaited and overdue empowerment of knowledge needed for all women and men predisposed to breast and ovarian cancers. This empowering book will help "previvors" and survivors alike, as well as the healthcare providers from whom they seek specialized care. All nurses involved in breast and ovarian cancer care, as well as patients at risk, should read this book.

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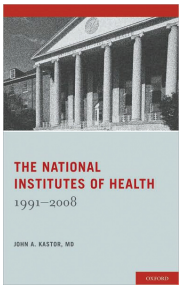
NEW RELEASES

The National Institutes of Health: 1991–2008. *John Kastor. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010, hardcover, 296 pages, $49.95.*

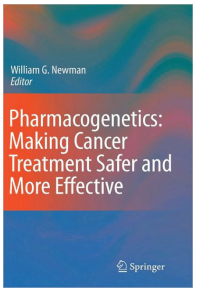
This book describes the premier organization for the performance and funding of biomedical research in the United States. By articulating events that occurred at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) from 1991–2008, the volume also



examines the leadership of directors Bernadine Healy, Harold Varmus, and Elias Zerhouni. To conduct his research, Kastor interviewed more than 200 people currently working at NIH, those who have left, and those funded by the institute. Kastor presents his findings on the operations, issues, controversies, finances, politics, and structure of NIH.

The book begins by examining topics such as NIH's evaluation of grant funding, the argument between those who favor support of basic biomedical science versus clinical research, the inclusion of HIV and AIDS in the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and the unique features of the Clinical Center, the hospital of NIH. The volume concludes with a review of the recent conflict of interest controversy, NIH's response to recent budget constrictions, and the role of the institutes in the Obama administration.

Pharmacogenetics: Making Cancer Treatment Safer and More Effective. *William G. Newman (Ed.). New York, NY: Springer, August 2010, hardcover, 245 pages, $179.*



Chemotherapy has made a dramatic difference to improved survival in patients with cancer. However, not all patients respond, and some experience serious side effects. *Pharmacogenetics: Making Cancer Treatment Safer and More Effective* is a current summary of the new field of how genetic testing can tailor more effective prescriptions in oncology. The text is targeted at oncologists and healthcare professionals involved in the treatment of patients with cancer. The book provides a core background in genetics and pharmacologic principles and chapters from acknowledged experts in the field on genetic tests in specific cancer types, including breast, bowel, and lung cancer. Clinical cases are used to illustrate the practical application of this knowledge. In addition, chapters on ethics, health economics, and the industry aspects of pharmacogenetics present the challenges and opportunities afforded by this new science.

Good to a Fault: A Novel. *Marina Endicott. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2010, hardcover, 384 pages, $25.99.*

This work of fiction wrings suspense and humor out of the everyday choices of a cancer caregiver, revealing the delicate balance between sacrifice and self-interest, doing good and being good. Clara Purdy is at a crossroads. At age 43, she is divorced, living in her late parents' house, and nearing her 20th year as a claims adjuster at a local insurance firm. Driving to the bank during her lunch hour, she crashes into a sharp left turn, taking the Gage family in the other car with her. When bruises on the mother, Lorraine, prove to be late-stage cancer, Clara decides to do the right thing. She moves Lorraine's three children and their terrible grandmother into her own house, and then has to cope with the consequences of practical goodness: exhaustion, fury, hilarity, and unexpected love.

Good to a Fault is an ultimately joyful book that digs deep with leavening humor into questions of morality, class, and social responsibility. Endicott looks at life and death through a compassionate, humane lens: being good, being at fault, and finding some balance in between.

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