

REVIEWS

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BOOKS

Outcomes in Radiation Therapy: Multidisciplinary Management. Deborah Watkins-Bruner*, Giselle Moore-Higgs*, Marilyn Haas*. Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2001, 704 pages, \$54.95.

Quick Moderate In-depth study Basic Intermediate Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required Hardcover



Historically, outcomes literature in radiation therapy has focused on the technical aspects of care and treatment response. This book is unique in that it offers a broadened view of outcomes. In the preface, the authors state that this text's purpose is to provide a multidisciplinary reference to the assessment, management, and measurement of outcomes that are perceived and experienced by patients. These include clinical, economic, and humanistic outcomes, such as quality of life and satisfaction with care. An outcomes-based management model of patient care that is the framework for the book is introduced in Chapter 1. The authors' concise definitions, examples, and a diagram of the model enhance readers' understanding of this framework.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part I, treatment modality outcomes are discussed for external beam, brachytherapy, and total body irradiation, as well as stereotactic, radiotherapy, radiation modifiers, and combined therapies. The information ranges from basic to complex. For example, a chapter devoted to radiation modifiers outlines the rationale for use of modifiers and also reviews results of clinical trials for specific modifiers. The chapters are consistent in their depth of content and structure as the purpose, expected outcomes, outcome measures, and outcomes management of each modality are presented. Although tables are used effectively to summarize information, diagrams would be helpful to illustrate treatment principles.

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Part II focuses on disease-specific treatment outcomes. The format of each chapter is consistent and clearly organized using a bulleted outline format to discuss incidence, risk factors, assessment, toxicities, outcomes management, outcome measures, expected outcomes, and follow up. Of particular interest in this section of the book is the discussion of quality-of-life instruments and studies for specific populations. When quality-of-life studies are limited, the authors suggest and describe appropriate instruments to use.

Many nurses will find the information in Part III about patient-related outcomes useful in their day-to-day practice. For example, nurses caring for patients with radiation-induced diarrhea may refer to the chapter on altered bowel elimination, which presents a comprehensive discussion of the problem, guidelines for assessment, instruments for measuring outcomes, and outcomes management. The latter includes pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic interventions and patient education. The outcomes model is applied to other patient-related outcomes, such as knowledge, comfort, protective mechanisms, nutrition, distress or coping, ventilation, sexuality, and functional status.

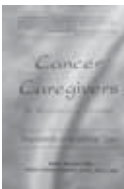
The strengths of *Outcomes in Radiation Therapy* include extensive reference lists, succinct presentation of information, multidisciplinary authorship, and discussion of quality-of-life issues. Perhaps the greatest strength of this book may be its potential weakness. The authors challenge the readers to think differently using the outcomes-based model of patient care. Readers must understand and apply this concept so that the book can be utilized fully as a resource.

This book is intended for professionals caring for patients undergoing radiation therapy. Nurses involved in patient care, quality improvement, research, and education will find this book an excellent resource.

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Cancer Caregivers: A Resource Guide. Karen Kirzner Adler, Rozlyn Forman Kleiman. Glen Rose, TX: Upstream Press, 2001, 272 pages, \$17.95 (proceeds are given to cancer causes).

Quick Moderate In-depth study Basic Intermediate Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required Softcover



A cancer diagnosis and the roller-coaster experience of treatment affect not only patients but also the caregiver team. *Cancer Caregivers* reminds readers that the role of a caregiver is to provide care and not control. The text offers readers both general and very detailed information about how to be effective caregivers and covers diverse subjects, such as what to pack for a hospital stay and how to give blood for planned transfusions. Given my own limits as a professional caregiver in a small community hospital, I shared the book with several caregivers of patients with cancer. The responses were mixed. Some reactions were, "My husband didn't have that experience" or "Dad wouldn't want to have known that." However, some of their comments reinforced the value of the book's hundreds of tips. In fact, my readers offered more helpful hints (e.g., "Bring a local telephone book with you if you have to go out of town for treatment." "Sometimes, insurances provide room and board for caregivers in the patient's room."). The authors should poll caregivers to add more practical tips to the cancer-caregiving world.

The text divides the cancer experience into six phases and provides blank areas for caregivers to add their own notes. The book's entire left-hand side is lined for note-taking, except for some cartoons and personal anecdotes. This feature perhaps would be more useful if the book had been formatted as a spiral notebook with hard covers, which would allow more room for both chronological notes and an easier writing surface.

Patients with cancer and their loved ones need guides that offer information about topics such as how to communicate openly with the medical team, navigate financial and insurance subtleties, and manage self-care reminders. However, individual guides, including this one, cannot be all things to all readers. *Cancer Caregivers* generally focuses on families undergoing prolonged and complex surgeries and treatments at large oncology centers in large cities. The text contains excellent general information about managing the cancer

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Ease of Reference and Usability	Content Level	Book Size
Quick, on-the-spot resource	Basic	Pocket size
Moderate time requirement	Intermediate	Intermediate
In-depth study	Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required	Desk reference

experience in hospitals, clinics, or at home and with insurance companies and communities. A great deal of resource data, information on complementary therapies, and specifics such as not to call the hospital floor during shift changes or meal times and how to obtain a temporary parking placard for drivers with disabilities also are included. However, this text is *not* a medical guide and is weakest in giving medical summaries. Because it is written for a lay audience, the authors tend to overgeneralize; therefore, readers must remember that each suggestion is just that—a suggestion.

Further editing would enhance this text. For example, important information on advance directives should be presented earlier rather than three quarters of the way through the text. The content is somewhat inaccurate (e.g., eating oatmeal does not reduce dietary fat), and the authors at times give unrealistic advice, such as getting to know all room nurses and aides. Despite these inadequacies, *Cancer Caregivers* is one of a growing number of helpful compilations, which focus on the difficult and challenging role of being a caregiver.

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Normal Tissue Reactions in Radiotherapy and Oncology. Wolfgang Dörr, Rita Engenhardt-Cabillic, Jörg S. Zimmerman. Basel, Switzerland: Karger, 2002, 206 pages, \$171.50.

Hardcover



This book, although not a nursing text, presents some interesting information for nurses who work in radiation oncology and want to learn about a variety of tissue reactions caused by radiation, as well as some methods to minimize the detrimental effects. Some sections of the book are very technical; however, most sections are more general and very understandable.

The ideal goal of radiation therapy is to maximize the radiation dose to a tumor and minimize the dose to normal tissue. Radiation dosing has been improved by the use of conformal treatment planning, intensity-modulated radiation therapy, and stereotactic radiosurgery and radiotherapy, all of which more precisely focus the dose on the tumor and decrease the normal tissue in the treatment area.

As cancer therapies improve and survival times increase, problems with late-stage side effects become more prevalent. An understanding of tissue reactions is necessary to improve management of these acute and late effects. As a result, this book presents a selection of articles from the International Symposium on Normal Tissue Reactions in Radiotherapy and Oncology, which was held in Germany in 2000.

The articles are grouped into general topics, including radiation biology, anemia-associated fatigue, outcome and rehabilitation, clinical management, radio- and cytoprotection, radio-surgery and stereotactic fractionated radiation therapy, radiation physics and intensity-modulated techniques, and treatment of head and neck and prostate cancer. Some of the articles are especially interesting. For example, one article highlights the mechanisms of chronic radiation damage (i.e., the focal nature of chronic damage, genetic susceptibility, and pharmacologic modulation). The author suggests that the pathogenesis of chronic radiation damage is dynamic and gives examples of myocardial and white matter necrosis and a role of cytokine activity. This also offers the possibility of therapeutic intervention. Another article describes tissue reactions during and after radiochemotherapy, whereas another discusses secondary malignancies after radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and combined therapy. The information about normal tissue reactions after radiosurgery and stereotactic radiotherapy also is pertinent for radiation nurses. These articles offer useful information for assessment, patient education, and, in some areas, interventions.

Some articles target nursing issues, such as physical and psychosocial rehabilitation of patients with cancer, radiotherapy-related fatigue and exercise for patients with cancer, and long-term side effects of radiotherapy in survivors of childhood cancer. An article on head and neck treatment covers surgical neck dissection and radiotherapy. Other articles are not widely useful for nurses, and some, especially those involving physics or intensity-modulated radiotherapy, are too technical.

The book contains many tables and graphs; some show analysis of study results, and others show dose distributions. Several photographs portray late effects in children and patients with head and neck cancer.

The articles in this book are not lengthy, ranging from 3–10 pages, which enables this mostly scientifically oriented book to be very readable. The articles provide a good resource for radiation nurses interested in learning about late-stage radiation side effects and some of the new and proposed ways to decrease and manage these effects. *Normal Tissue Reactions in Radiotherapy and Oncology* contains a great deal of useful biologic information.

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Other Books

Hitting the Wall: Memoir of a Cancer Journey. Barbara Pate Glacel. Lynnwood, WA: Hara Publishing Group, 2001, 216 pages, \$16.95 (soft cover).

Hitting the Wall: Memoir of a Cancer Journey chronicles one woman's passage through her breast cancer experience and beyond from

a new perspective. Living in Belgium when she was first diagnosed with breast cancer, the author found herself cut off from physical contact with her family, friends, and colleagues in the United States. Turning to e-mail, she kept her loved ones apprised of her condition and eventually created an international support group for those who face breast cancer that continues today. *Hitting the Wall* offers an invaluable resource for patients with breast cancer and their loved ones and survivors.

A Helping Hand: The Resource Guide for People With Cancer. New York: Cancer Care, Inc., 2002, 148 pages (soft cover), cost is free (shipping and handling charges only) by calling 800-813-HOPE or ordering online at www.cancercare.org.

This guide details national and regional organizations that offer resources, such as information, education, and support services; programs that provide free medication; and commercial outlets for products, such as wigs, headwear, and prostheses. Local resource information can connect patients with cancer with services such as transportation, financial aid, and hospice and home care.

W E B S I T E



Name of site: American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO)

URL: www.astro.org

Authorship: Group: ASTRO

Privacy statement: Present, comprehensive, and easy to find.

Disclosure statement: Present, comprehensive, and easy to find. No advertising is found on the site.

Content highlights: This fast-loading, text-based site is easy to navigate and contains a wealth of information about ASTRO and radiation therapy. The bulk of the content is available to the public, including some excellent public newsgroups about brachytherapy that are not found elsewhere on the Web. A members-only section houses information about healthcare policy and practice, government relations, ASTRO news, and ASTRO-grams. Similar to ONS Online, the site has an editor, Prabhakar Tripathaneni, MD, and an editorial board to oversee the content.

Elizabeth Gomez, RN, MSN, AOCN®
Editor, ONS Online