

B O O K S

The Medical Library Association Guide to Cancer Information: Authoritative, Patient-Friendly, Print and Electronic Resources. Ruti Volk*, New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2007, 372 pages, \$85.

   **Softcover**



The Medical Library Association Guide to Cancer Information: Authoritative, Patient-Friendly, Print and Electronic Resources is a comprehensive guide to help nurses, librarians, and other professionals assist patients and caregivers in locating high-quality information on cancer diagnosis and treatment in a quick and efficient manner. Divided into three main parts, it offers not only an overview of key cancer concepts and terminology, but also detailed introductions to 25 types of adult cancer and 10 childhood cancers along with annotated lists of resources such as brochures, booklets, books (including numerous Oncology Nursing Society titles), chapters, Web sites, audiovisual materials, and patient support organizations. The first part of the book provides a primer with three Cancer 101 chapters. The second (and most substantial) part is devoted to essential resources for finding information on specific adult and childhood cancers. The arrangement by site and type is ideal; for example, if a patient with lung cancer requests educational information from an oncology nurse, the corresponding chapter on lung cancer may be consulted quickly

for a basic overview as well as a listing of patient education resources and support organizations. The authoritative organizations are well represented, such as the American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, and Lung Cancer Alliance.

With targeted therapies continually emerging, the book includes a relevant section (and the index includes Targeted Therapies, which are covered in the Drug Therapies section). Considering the millions of people affected by cancer and the enormous amount of information available, the objectives of the book are worthwhile and met. In addition, the author and contributors possess credible expertise: The author of the forward is the director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Michigan. Although guides to finding cancer information are available in the professional and popular literature—and in collections of resources, especially Web sites, maintained by many cancer organizations—few, if any, are as comprehensive and well organized. Overall, the resources and references are current; the 2007 copyright of the book makes it more timely than many other cancer directories and books devoted to finding information, and the author maintains an associated blog at <http://mblog.lib.umich.edu/VolkMLAGuide>, featuring additions and updates to the book. All print publications such as this one that list URLs run the risk of them becoming invalid links over time, but this is offset by the fact that the book repeatedly cites entire organizations as appropriate resources (e.g., American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute) rather than unique Web pages.

Note. The reviewer authored a four-star review of the book for Doody's Review Service (www.doody.com)

Mark Vrabel, MLS, AHIP
Information Resources Supervisor
Oncology Nursing Society
Pittsburgh, PA

* Oncology Nursing Society member

I Survived Cancer But Never Won the Tour de France. Jim Chastain, Tulsa, OK: Hawk Publishing Group, 2006, 175 pages, \$19.95.

   **Softcover**



Jim Chastain was a 37-year-old lawyer for the state of Oklahoma when, on a short a trip to get a snow cone with his family, he remembers, “My old life ended and a new one began.” It was during that family outing when he first noticed the tiny lump on the underside of his right arm that ultimately would be diagnosed as malignant fibrous histiocytoma. From the title to the afterword, Chastain accomplishes his purpose: to write a book with which patients with cancer and their families might identify, and one that could be enjoyed by someone with no cancer connection. He wrote to address five practical needs that he believes patients with cancer experience: “the need to laugh, the need to be real, the need to know (that is, to receive valuable insider information on what cancer is like), the need to be known, and the need to find hope.” Ultimately, he wrote the book he wished he could have read during his own experience.

In 17 chapters, Chastain lets readers ride along his cancer experience through prose alternating with poetry. Uniquely, the book is written from the point of view of a young man facing a cancer diagnosis and treatment issues, those dealt with in many survivor memoirs, and also the issue that most memoirs do not tackle: recurrent cancer. He captures the “strange paradoxes of cancer” that he calls the “wow moments.” His candid, touching, funny, awkward, and brutally honest accounts of his interactions with his professional caregivers make the book a humbling must-read for anyone who cares for patients with cancer in any capacity. Looking in the mirror can be painful, but Chastain helps readers see humor in even the most unflattering descriptions of his experience. He portrays the loneliness of isolation in a brachytherapy room, the panic of a magnetic resonance imaging scan, the numbness of hearing the word recurrence, and the humor in knowing when to “play the cancer card” as

Ease of Reference and Usability	Content Level	Media 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

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