

A Patient's Guide to Cancer: Understanding the Causes and Treatments of a Complex Disease

John F. McDonald

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A Patient's Guide to Cancer is a supportive lay resource with science-backed guidance for cancer patients.

John F. McDonald's book is an informative, compassionate self-help guide for those who have been diagnosed with cancer.

A no-nonsense, to-the-point discussion of cancer, and of what those diagnosed with cancer can expect as the disease progresses, the book begins by demystifying cancer itself. It does so via detailed explanations of the medical mechanisms that misfire and create malignancies. This work is succinct but knowledgeable, starting at the microbiological level and scaling up to the observable malfunctions that lead to a cancer diagnosis.

While some science is involved in the book's fast discussions, they are generally accessible—thanks, in great part, to McDonald's clear, concise prose. Indeed, complex medical concepts and treatments are explained with speed and in a way that is easy to understand, while different types of cancer, stages of cancer, possibilities for recovery, and treatment options are covered in informative, empowering terms. Also in the course of this work, surgical and chemical treatment options are described and evaluated in terms of their benefits and disadvantages, including chemotherapy.

The book includes tables, diagrams, and photographs to better illustrate the technical details of a cancer diagnosis and treatment, and its glossary is helpful when it comes to understanding the specialized terms used throughout the book. Elsewhere, terms are understood via contextual clues, but however its language is handled, the book's progression suggests constant awareness of its audience, striving to make its information as easy to navigate as is possible for general patients and caregivers.

Because it strives to cover such extensive ground, the book ends up imparting a solid foundational understanding of cancer—a basis from which people will be better equipped to evaluate the options that are available to them. It is designed to be used as a handy reference; thus, italics and bold fonts are used to call attention to the most important points of each chapter, making it quick and easy to find sought-after information. Given the book's short length, though, many of its examinations remain quite cursory; its view of the disease is an overarching one, and its discussions of cancer's various manifestations are comparatively brief. Thus, it may be reasonably regarded as a good starting point, and indeed, there are plenty of references included throughout the text for those who want to do further research on particular topics.

A Patient's Guide to Cancer is a supportive lay resource that includes fast, science-backed guidance for cancer patients.

MATT BENZING (May 22, 2023)

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