Clarion Review

Health & Fitness

Cancer from A to Z
Edward H. Laughlin
978-1-4343-5465-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

This compilation of cancer-related information brings together definitions details descriptions and resources in one easy-to-read book. Dr. Edward H. Laughlin is a professor of surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Regional Medical Campus-Huntsville. He refrains from using medical jargon instead providing layman's definitions when referencing such terminology. For example the term "metastasize" is almost always followed by the word "spread."

Laughlin's well-planned book begins with a 300-page dictionary of terms. Although pronunciation help is not included for these terms the author provides clear definitions. It is not an exhaustive list but one that includes the most often encountered least understood terms. It also defines basic terms such as abdomen genital hyper and larynx for added understanding. Readers will even find information about drugs such as Abraxane: "Albumen bound paclitaxel; used to treat breast cancer that recurs after prior chemotherapy. Unlike regular paclitaxel this injectable chemotherapy drug contains no toxic solvent and lessens some unwanted side effects." Readers who are unfamiliar with paclitaxel can simply turn to the "P" section.

Due to the alphabetical order of the definitions readers will need to know the name of a term to find it yet the compact size of the book makes reading the entire dictionary a reasonable undertaking.

But this is more than a dictionary of cancer-related terms. The author also provides snippets of information about thirty-seven malignancies in adults and children. Each entry begins with an overview which is followed by the type of tumor or spread and risk factors such as "it occurs often in HIV-positive homosexual and bisexual men." The author then lists symptoms diagnosis determining stage the stages themselves and other considerations that include methods available for treatment. When discussing soft tissue cancer he writes "Treatment combining surgery radiation and chemotherapy has greatly improved the survival for those with soft tissue sarcomas and individuals with small tumors who receive optimum

therapy….However newer methods of radiation therapy and chemotherapy are needed to further improve results…”

The author includes guidelines on nutrition and physical activities proposed by the American Cancer Society to prevent cancer as well as information about self- and professional exams and the warning signs of cancer. Resources for more information and support groups and agencies are also listed. This may be the book’s weakest link since the information could quickly become outdated.

Cancer from A to Z packs helpful vital information from an authoritative expert into an easy to read and understand format. This book would be valuable for clarifying information received from one’s health care provider.

Dawn Goldsmith