

My Cancer Survival Saga: And How You Could Star in Yours

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My Cancer Survival Saga is a cancer memoir-cum-personalized-self-help text about alternative medicine approaches to the disease.

In her memoir *My Cancer Survival Saga*, Jen Kimberley recounts how she went from being cavalier about her health to traveling the world in search of cancer treatments.

Kimberley was unemployed and still mourning her husband's death from cancer when she, too, received a cancer diagnosis, for chronic myeloid leukemia. Feeling fine, Kimberley took the medicine her doctor prescribed, and didn't dwell much on the diagnosis until years later, when she suffered a mild stroke. Determined to be more proactive about her health, she investigated the world of alternative cancer treatment and created a treatment regimen of her own.

Kimberley's story spans several years; her investigation took her around the world. The text covers the places she visited, including Thailand and Germany, and the people who helped her, with warmth and gratitude. Even when detailing unpleasant procedures or health scares, the book maintains an upbeat tone and outlook, though its evasion of commas leads to run-on sentences.

Kimberley's story is punctuated by information on the medical aspects of cancer and cancer treatment, but both its narrative and scientific portions are written in direct, accessible language. It makes claims such as that appropriate cancer treatments will differ from person to person and from type of cancer to type of cancer; it argues for the importance of researching potential treatments for oneself before trying anything. It posits that the best way to treat cancer is by targeting not just the cancer itself, but the whole body and mind. In accordance with this philosophy, it suggests ways to improve one's overall physical and mental health, including meditation exercises and dietary changes.

In a broad sense, the book's advice—including to find a supportive doctor, eat a healthy diet, and avoid harsh chemicals where possible—is solid, but some of its specific advice is troubling. It names multiple treatments, including coffee enemas, that are potentially dangerous, and it cites individuals whose work has been debunked, including Max Gerson, treating their conclusions as incontrovertible and glossing over controversies around them and dissenting information. Its list of resources mixes credible sources with questionable ones.

While the text includes practical advice about staying optimistic, its prioritization of intuition and wishful thinking over established facts minimizes research-based treatments in favor of medically ineffective ones. Though conveying curiosity about alternative medicine, absorbing the book's self-help and medical aspects without discernment is ill advised.

With blank spaces at the end of its chapters for taking notes and recording thoughts, *My Cancer Survival Saga* is a cancer memoir-cum-personalized-self-help text about alternative medicine approaches to the disease.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May 25, 2021)

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