

# REVIEWS

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## B O O K S

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

⊗ ⊗ ✓ ✓ “Y” “Y” 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).

⊗ ✓ “Y” “Y” 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	“Y” Pocket size
⊗ ⊗ Moderate time requirement	✓ ✓ Intermediate	“Y” “Y” Intermediate
⊗ ⊗ ⊗ In-depth study	✓ ✓ ✓ Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required	“Y” “Y” “Y” Desk reference