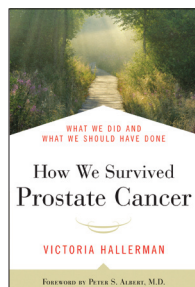


## BOOKS

**How We Survived Prostate Cancer: What We Did and What We Should Have Done.** Victoria Hallerman. New York, NY: Newmarket Press, 2009, softcover, 208 pages, \$16.95.



Prize-winning poet and professional writer Victoria Hallerman makes a significant contribution to the self-help literature on prostate cancer survivorship with her recent book, which is exquisitely

written and highly informative. The text is an engaging account of a six-year period through which Hallerman and her husband, Dean, experienced prostate cancer diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing life as cancer survivors. The book succeeds in poignantly capturing these events from the multiple perspectives of the wife, the husband with prostate cancer, and their combined view as a couple. The book also includes a great deal of factual information about prostate cancer, its treatment, and coping resources.

The diverse content of *How We Survived Prostate Cancer* is distributed evenly throughout the narrative, including the main story of what happened from the wife's point of view, her husband's comments as covered in sections throughout titled "In Dean's Words," and what was learned in the "What We Know Now" sections. The appendixes are excellent resources on current treatment options, side effects of hormone therapy, "Dr. Peter Albert's Top Ten List for Prostate Cancer Patients and Their Partners," support groups and Web resources, and anticipated developments in prostate cancer research and treatment. The glossary and bibliography also will be very helpful to anyone seeking to make sense of the world of prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment for the first time.

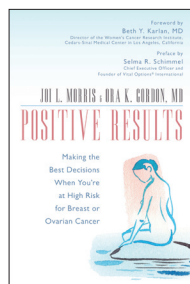
Among the major lessons learned and discussed in depth is the importance of finding healthcare providers with whom one feels very comfortable, both in terms of interpersonal interaction and overall approach to treatment. In general, the reader is advised that the couple faced

should go for a second and, perhaps, a third opinion and read as much as possible about the disease. Hallerman puts a high priority on finding a doctor who encourages the consideration of a wide range of treatment options. She also strongly suggests that the patient with prostate cancer should be accompanied by his partner or another support person when meeting with doctors to facilitate communication during the appointments and to assist in the later recall and interpretation of what happened and what was said. Searching the Internet for prostate cancer information and attending support groups are highly recommended. The book also provides much useful information on how to get started with such activities.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *How We Survived Prostate Cancer* is the comprehensive discussion of the impact that the disease and its treatment had on the couple's marriage and sexual relationship. Coping with the side effects of hormone therapy without a prior understanding of the details or extent of its effects was one of the most difficult challenges they faced. Hallerman makes a persuasive appeal for increased education and support for the patient receiving androgen ablation, as well as his intimate partner.

Gerald Bennett, PhD, APRN, FAAN, is the associate dean for research in the School of Nursing at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta.

**Positive Results: Making the Best Decisions When You're at High Risk for Breast or Ovarian Cancer.** Joi L. Morris and Ora K. Gordon. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2010, softcover, 395 pages, \$20.



*Positive Results* is an important new book for women and men who are facing the presence of hereditary breast and ovarian cancer in their families. A combination of memoir and refer-

ence book, the authors successfully provide objective information and caring guidance for readers to realistically examine their risks and options related to the breast cancer genes. Morris, the first author, learned at age 42 that she has a genetic mutation on a gene known as

*BRCA2*, beginning an extensive process of study and consultation leading to her difficult decision to undergo prophylactic mastectomies. The authors do not assume that everyone would make this decision. The emphasis of the book is on raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and empowering those at risk for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer to consider all of their options within a context of compassionate support.

The authors acknowledge the difficulty of coming up with the "right" decision regarding personal health surveillance, and they strongly encourage men and women to seek advice and opinions from their doctors. They stress that the right decision for one woman may not be for another. The authors conclude that, "The 'right' decision is the one that fits your life, your circumstances, and your risk tolerance. . . . It is the one that allows you to sleep at night."

*Positive Results* is organized in three sections: (a) assessing risk through genetic testing and family history, (b) understanding increased risk for cancer and management, and (c) decision making for increased risk. Every section has vignettes and quotations from Morris and the dozens of men and women interviewed. The book's humanity comes from the stories of Morris and other women and men who have made the tough decisions required to survive in this world of increased risk.

Part 1 describes genetics 101, in which the reader learns the fundamental concept of a gene and basic science terms such as DNA, chromosome, nucleotides, and polymorphism. The section goes through a scientific historical perspective that encompasses the Human Genome Project, the discovery of *BRCA1* and *BRCA2*, and the significance of mutations on the *BRCA* genes as a causative factor for cancer. Genetic counseling and testing are recommended for individuals who have a significant family history of cancers in their family. The book acknowledges that deciding whether to be tested or not can be difficult. Several personal stories of individuals who feared knowing their risk and how they overcame that apprehension are included. The book also discusses how to talk about cancer and gene mutation risk with children.

Part 2 involves understanding increased risk for cancer and management for *BRCA*-mutation carriers and those