
The arrangement by site and type is ideal; the most unflattering descriptions of his experience. He portrays the loneliness of isolation and the need to be real, the need to know (that is, to receive valuable insider information on what cancer is like), the need to be known, and the need to find hope. Ultimately, he wrote the book he wished he could have read during his cancer experience: “the need to laugh, the need to be known, the need to be real, the need to know (that is, to receive valuable insider information on what cancer is like), the need to be known, and the need to find hope.” Ultimately, he wrote the book he wished he could have read during his own experience.

In 17 chapters, Chastain lets readers ride along his cancer experience through prose alternating with poetry. Uniquely, the book is written from the point of view of a young man facing a cancer diagnosis and treatment issues, those dealt with in many survivor memoirs, and also the issue that most memoirs do not tackle: recurrent cancer. He captures the strange paradoxes of cancer” that he calls the “wow moments.” His candid, touching, funny, awkward, and brutally honest accounts of his experiences section. Considering the millions of people affected by cancer and the enormous amount of information available, the objectives of the book are worthwhile and met. In addition, the author and contributors possess credible expertise: The author of the forward is the director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Michigan. Although guides to finding cancer information are available in the professional and popular literature—and in collections of resources, especially Web sites, maintained by many cancer organizations—few, if any, are as comprehensive and well organized. Overall, the resources and references are current; the 2007 copyright of the book makes it more timely than many other cancer directories and books devoted to finding information, and the author maintains an associated blog at http://mblog.lib.umich.edu/VolkMLAguide, featuring additions and updates to the book. All print publications such as this one that list URLs run the risk of them becoming invalid links over time, but this is offset by the fact that the book repeatedly cites entire organizations as appropriate resources (e.g., American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute) rather than unique Web pages.

Note. The reviewer authored a four-star review of the book for Doody’s Review Service (www.doody.com)

Mark Vrabel, MLS, AHIP Information Resources Supervisor Oncology Nursing Society Pittsburgh, PA


Jim Chastain was a 37-year-old lawyer for the state of Oklahoma when, on a short a trip to get a snow cone with his family, he remembers, “My old life ended and a new one began.” It was during that family outing when he first noticed the tiny lump on the underside of his right arm that ultimately would be diagnosed as malignant fibrous histiocytoma. From the title to the afterword, Chastain accomplishes his purpose: to write a book with which patients with cancer and their families might identify, and one that could be enjoyed by someone with no cancer connection. He wrote to address five practical needs that he believes patients with cancer experience: “the need to laugh, the need to be real, the need to know (that is, to receive valuable insider information on what cancer is like), the need to be known, and the need to find hope.” Ultimately, he wrote the book he wished he could have read during his own experience.

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