Book Review


It is my distinct pleasure to review this much-needed book titled *The Cancer Experience.*

As a cancer surgeon with many years of experience, Dr. Sessions brings to us an array of examples that highlight the ups and downs, rights and wrongs, do’s and don’ts of treating patients with head and neck neoplasms throughout their cancer experience. His insight, depth of knowledge, and empathy toward this patient population, as written in the book, is truly exhausting and could only be done by someone with Dr. Sessions’ experience and insight. He has lived and survived all of the experiences referred to in the text, and is therefore in the most unique position of being an authority on how to inform us, the readers, on how to survive cancer and how to be most supportive of our patients’ challenges. The material is presented in a clear and concise manner that includes both the critical and contrasting points of view of the many sections.

The importance of a healthy approach to any relationship with an oncology patient can be seen in his quote, “I have come to realize that most cancer physicians don’t begin to realize how powerful their influence is.” Dr. Sessions does draw heavily from his own professional experiences, and in some sections the book takes on more of a memoir approach. Other chapters seem to be a release of other personal views that may not be entirely related to the topic of oncology.

Regardless, the sense of empathy and understanding of the complexities of cancer, its treatment, and its effects both emotional and those associated with the comorbidities on both the patient and their family, are heavily detailed. The journey is a difficult one, and it is well presented in a balanced way throughout all of the chapters.

For newly trained surgeons/physicians and other health care professionals, the book offers insights on how best to tackle difficult issues. For the more experienced physician, it may offer an alternative viewpoint or support an already established practice and approach. The cancer experience reminds us that we not only treat the cancer, but we should treat the patient who has just been told they have cancer. This again is very well articulated throughout the text.

This book represents an important resource for cancer physicians both at a junior and senior level as well as for the families of cancer patients. In addition, it would be very worthwhile reading for residents/fellows and other professionals in the health care field and should be added to the library of all those involved in the management of the cancer patient. I enjoyed reading this book and found it both refreshing and insightful. It reflects considerable personal experience, and I commend Dr. Sessions for his creativity in the completion of this valuable, timely, and thoughtful contribution.

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