

Patient Resource Guides

B O O K S

American Cancer Society Consumers Guide to Cancer Drugs. Gail M. Wilkes*, Terri B. Ades*, Irwin Krakoff. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett, 2000, 480 pages, \$22.95.

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The purpose of this handbook is to provide information to the public about medications used by patients with cancer. Both chemotherapy and symptom management drugs are included in separate sections of the book. For each drug, the trade name, category, classification, action, route, directions, warnings, food/drug/activity interactions, precautions, and side effects are covered on two pages. Bold print is used for each heading.

The first section of the book includes 22 pages of chemotherapy principles. The authors explain the cell cycle, mechanisms of action for each classification of chemotherapy drugs, rationale for different routes, and treatment schedules. Each side effect or organ toxicity is included in the book. The first section is printed in an easy-to-read font with bold headings to differentiate topics; however, the remainder of the book is in very small print.

A reference that is written in a straightforward manner for the general public and is affordable is an excellent idea. Unfortunately, this book is written at a level that is more appropriate for medical-surgical nurses caring for an occasional patient with cancer. Words such as gastrointestinal, normal flora, fungi, perineal, anaphylactic, and fibrosis are used throughout the book without explanation. Antibiotics are used to “treat gram positive and gram negative bacteria.” Although a glossary exists at the end of the book, many

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medical terms are not included. In several instances, the language becomes rather informal (e.g., “If you use laxatives all the time, the body forgets the normal process of moving your bowels.”). Of particular concern are the pages on narcotic analgesics. All of the morphine drugs are discussed together with no delineation between those to be used on a scheduled basis and those to be used on an as-needed basis, and no mention is made of pain prevention. All of the pages on narcotic analgesics warn to “take the smallest effective dose to prevent tolerance and physical dependence.” The book does not discuss which narcotic analgesics cannot be crushed or chewed.

The *Consumers Guide* is thorough in discussing many drugs for symptom management, including antibiotics, laxatives, and antidepressants. However, simple measures that patients can try before or in addition to resorting to drugs are lacking and should be included. A drug pronunciation guide also would be helpful.

Many patients with cancer may find this book difficult to understand. Other publications, such as those from the National Cancer Institute, provide the same information in easier to understand text, although not in a comprehensive book format. However, well-educated patients or medical-surgical nurses will find this book quite beneficial.

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Breast Cancer Sourcebook. Edward J. Pruncha, Karen Bellenir (Eds.). Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, Inc., 2001, 600 pages, \$78.

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The *Breast Cancer Sourcebook* is a new title in the Health Reference Series, which provides an array of reference books on a



broad range of medical concerns from AIDS to worldwide health. This first edition is divided into the following: assessing breast health, breast cancer fundamentals, evaluating breast cancer risk factors, mammograms and other screening tools, treatment options, clinical trials and other research, and coping with breast cancer. Every section contains several short chapters pertaining to that section’s topic. Each chapter is well organized, referenced, and indexed, and can easily stand alone. The primary purpose of the *Sourcebook* is to provide basic consumer information about breast health and breast cancer. Current nursing and medical research findings and clinical trials in breast cancer prevention, screening, and treatment are presented. The editors provide a great deal of information with appropriate citations without making it overwhelming for the reader. Medical terminology is defined in lay terms, and helpful illustrations are provided. The *Sourcebook* can be used as a comprehensive reference for clients asking questions of healthcare providers. The book is user friendly and has a reading level of approximately 12th grade. An excellent resource directory for additional information regarding support groups, financial assistance, and Internet sites, this text would be an asset to public libraries, women’s centers, and visiting nurse agencies for patient or client information. However, keeping the information current may be problematic.

The text can be improved by including information related to ethnic groups and their risk factors for breast cancer. By addressing the needs of this group of women, the text would become a resource for underserved populations thereby increasing knowledge related to lifestyle, screening, and cancer control activities. Although the *Sourcebook* may be redundant to Internet resources, it reviews a lot of information. One can use the Internet more effectively by using the *Sourcebook* first. Overall, it is an excellent resource for public information.

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Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/02.ONF.729-731

Ease of Reference and Usability	Content Level	Book Size
🕒 Quick, on-the-spot resource	✓ Basic	👤 Pocket size
🕒🕒 Moderate time requirement	✓ ✓ Intermediate	👤👤 Intermediate
🕒🕒🕒 In-depth study	✓ ✓ ✓ Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required	👤👤👤 Desk reference