Cancer Sourcebook

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This sourcebook is the sixth edition in the Editor’s Health Reference Series. The book provides the reader with a comprehensive and a contemporary view of the spectrum of cancer, its prevention, diagnosis and treatment, including end of life care. It provides the reader with statistical information and lifestyle issues that may increase risk factors for the development of cancer.

Although the book has a strong focus on cancer-related health care and services in an American context, it is a valuable resource for Australian consumers and health care professionals working in the area of cancer, especially in terms of access to online resources.

The text covers a range of treatment modalities and includes a chapter on complementary and alternative medicine. It should be noted that because of the US focus, information on certain treatments or services included in the book may not necessarily be available in Australia.

I found the book easy to follow, as the author has been very clear in her preface as to how to most effectively use this resource. The book is divided into chapters related to each specific cancer. In the beginning of each chapter there is a general introduction about the cancer under discussion and then particular information related to detection, treatment modalities, pathology and at times some simple schematic drawings related to the cancer type.

The author discusses the process and benefits of obtaining a second opinion, and includes information about advance directives and living wills. A comprehensive glossary of cancer-related terminology provides an easy to understand reference for consumers and carers. The book contains excerpts and evidence from reputable organisations including the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Cancer Research UK and the American Institute for Cancer Research.

The author however, does not include any specific advice on survivorship or supportive care in any depth, except in the chapters on cancer recurrence and palliative care, although it is noted that the primary focus of the book is on cancer treatment and symptom management. One unique aspect of this book is the chapter on ‘cancer fraud’ and unproven therapies which hold false promises.

Overall, I would recommend this book to Australian consumers as a resource for basic information concerning the various types of cancer and treatment management, with the caveat that it has a significant American focus.

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