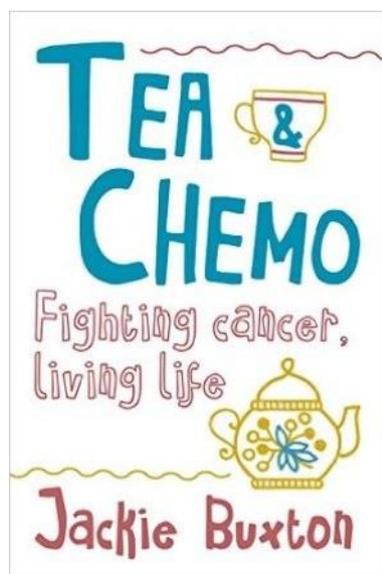


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**Tea & chemo. Fighting cancer,
living life (2015)**

Buxton J.

Urbane Publications Limited, 2015.

208pp.

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Average star rating 4.6 (out of 5)

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This is a good book for someone with breast cancer, carers or partners, relatives, health professionals and anyone interested in what it's like to go through breast cancer – not just the emotional impact, the physical changes and side-effects of treatment, but also the seldom-mentioned things like 'chemo brain'(!). In one section, the author explains the help and support from others that she found useful and covers what to say to someone with cancer; this is often difficult for people and will be of interest to friends and relatives.

The author relates her experiences as they happened – from diagnosis, through treatment, to moving on. The chapters are logical and often subtitled (e.g. losing your hair, the wig phase). It is very easy to understand as it is written in a conversational style and this is influenced by the fact that much of the book is based on the author's blog. The tone varies from factual to humorous but is always friendly, approachable and candid. At the end, there is an appendix with a glossary and useful websites, several of which were new to me.

The multi-coloured cover has impact and appeal. Inside, the typeface is clear with some pretty line illustrations and a few black-and-white photographs of the author. She includes links to useful websites, thus sharing her experience in a very practical way. She is very self-aware and honest, and I like her philosophy that you "have to be down to be up"; she sees the positives in having gone through the experience of cancer, which some authors neglect and which chimes with my own view.

I like the author's approach to her diagnosis and treatment (she is very honest about how hard it is), the personal challenges (especially fear of an operation if you haven't had one before and going into the unknown when you have chemo), and her sense of humour (a chapter on hair loss is called "Your personality in your hands"). I found it very easy to relate to her, and found myself often saying "yes, that's what I thought!". She mentions things that someone who's gone through cancer remembers, like your "cancerversary" (when you were diagnosed) which is always with you.

Whilst mainly for general interest, rather than a 'how to' guide or technical thesis, this book is useful in giving a positive and honest perspective of the challenging times that you go through with treatment for breast cancer.

A great book. I read it in two or three sittings and felt as if I was listening to a friend, laughing, being sad with her and ultimately celebrating in her recovery. I recommend it – it is about helping others recognise that you don't have to be defined by your cancer, that positive things do come out of the experience and that there is always hope and humour to be found.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (July 2016)

This will be useful for breast cancer patient and their relatives and friends. Jackie gives honest answers to situations that would occur between friends. It is very easy to read and appealing in looks and feel. The page layout is excellent. I will probably recommend it. I do worry about providing information before someone is ready for it.

Living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (66-75) (July 2016)

Get this book the day you are diagnosed! Based on Jackie's blogs, it is easy reading with a motivation to help others. It is the "time of not knowing" that is the worst and it will help greatly in managing expectations. It is brilliant for anyone who has, or who knows someone with, breast cancer. It might appeal to other cancer patients, but its relevance will be less personal. Having had breast cancer some years ago, I was delighted to find so many good examples, hints and tips in one place. Personal wellbeing is at the centre of lots of well-presented ideas, both explored and suggested. It is about retaining who you are, challenging your ability to do the things you do, unafraid, and choosing who you want to be now. It reminds you not to add to the illness by being hard on yourself and there is lots of evidence of hope.

Jackie says, "as well as the facts I wanted an honest account of the experience of cancer"; she delivers this! She avoids including too much information and has a sound respect for credible, relevant sources. There is no scary jargon or statistics, but that doesn't mean it is not well researched with lots of useful references to follow up. It follows the process from diagnosis to post chemo, covering pretty much everything – lifestyle, hair loss, talking about it, helping others, exercise; the medical and the downright practical – in an appealing and approachable way. There is lots of good practical advice about what happens, what to look for, and lots of relevant information about lifestyle options for change, for example useful references to the value of sleep, exercise, and alcohol awareness.

It is a great book if you want to feel more in control of the situation, well written and in no way daunting! I like how Jackie embraced every aspect of her treatment, took each step consciously and sought good information to make informed decisions, for herself and her treatment. She takes a considered and open approach to things like the cold cap, with practical evidence on experience and success. Both sides of each situation are explored, for example, reconstructive surgery is powerfully discussed, encouraging people to think about what must be considered at each step. The advice is good; early awareness allows for better options further down the line.

There is not, nor should there be, anything against cheeriness. This is the story of an optimist, a good-humoured coper. I love it, but it may seem flippant to those who are

struggling. I like humour around cancer, it is how I cope, but you might not see the funny side until diagnosis is a little less raw. I also believe that cancer made my life better and Jackie talks about the things she gained and enjoyed from the experience; I am aware that some people find this approach inappropriate.

This gentle list of things that help – and things that don't – should be read by every carer, friend and professional. Jackie has tried to include as much useful information as possible and all arguments are balanced. There is lots about lifestyle and opportunity that will help any patient, carer, or health professional. I am not a fan of being told what to do but Jackie doesn't do that; it is like the best advice from a well-informed source that allows me to make better decisions for myself. I enjoyed it so much that I wish there was more! It is the first-defence treatment guide, but it would be brilliant to have more on the impact on life a year or so on, on reconstructive surgery and on the long-term perspective, from such an accomplished author!

Treated for breast cancer 2005 (46-55) (June 2016)

I love this book. It is so accessible for anyone with an interest in the subject; it feels as if she has taken the words out of my mouth on many occasions. It is so refreshing to understand that others think and feel the same as you do when going through cancer treatment. It could be useful for anyone affected by a cancer diagnosis. It is most useful for just dealing with the aspects of the 'every day' when your world has been turned upside down. The practical ideas about how to deal with the potential effect of menopause are great. Each of the sections has helpful hints and ideas on how to approach each issue without telling the reader what to do (as often happens in books written by 'experts' or 'professionals').

It all flows nicely and is written in such a way that you can dip in and out of sections as they apply to you. It is easy to understand and there is a fab list at the back with descriptions. It feels as if you are having a chat with the author over a cup of tea, which is obviously her aim, so it is written relatively informally. It includes links to sensible websites if you need more information. The general layout is fine; there could have been a few more pictures or photos, but it's fine without them.

I like everything about this book! It's hard to say for sure, but I feel I would have found it very comforting in the early days of my diagnosis in contrast to some of the more medical publications I read. Many newly diagnosed patients, and their family and friends, could find it a very useful reference point.

Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009, continue to take Tamoxifen (36-45) (June 2016)

This fantastic book is a must read! I love the positive outlook and the humour. It has helpful information and Jackie is very down to earth and heart-warming. It will particularly suit someone who feels it's the end of the world. Everything is explained perfectly well. I love the title and the typeface is perfect, as is the layout.

Lost dad to lung cancer; friend of breast cancer patient (36-45) (June 2016)

At the age of 45, professional writer, wife, and mother of two daughters, Jackie Buxton was diagnosed with breast cancer. This book follows her diagnosis, experiences of treatment and its consequences, and many of the challenges that she faced along the way. Her purpose in writing this book was that she wanted to write an honest experience of cancer. She adds that when first diagnosed, 'I wanted a book that would educate me in a softly, softly way. I wanted the author to be an ordinary person who was still enjoying life, who'd got through to the other side, and, crucially, done it without any Super Powers'. Jackie has gone on to write that book – for others. In my view, she has certainly succeeded in her aim. Her book gives a factual account of her appointments, diagnosis, treatment options, surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and her life outside the context of cancer. Rather than just writing about her own experiences, Jackie presents this information in a way that is beneficial to others. She carried on with her social life, her hobbies and interests and worked when she could. Throughout the nine months of treatment, she remained positive and upbeat, although acknowledging some of the difficulties she had.

It is easy to understand with lots of tips and advice to people with a cancer diagnosis and friends and carers of those with cancer. It is most useful for daily living, undergoing cancer treatment, and the practicalities of hair loss and surgery. Jackie explains any 'necessary jargon' (i.e. the names of drugs and their side effects). Otherwise, the language is plain and easy to understand. It is a standard-size paperback book, with a friendly and informal cover. There is a drawing of a teapot and cup, with the title in a font that I would describe as childlike. It isn't attractive (to me), but that doesn't really matter. Lots of people will probably like it. It was good to see some photos of Jackie in the book. She looks smiley and positive in them all.

I like just about everything about this book! What is not to like! Jackie has done extensive research, and she is generous with the knowledge, tips, and advice that she shares, signposting readers to valuable sources of reference on the internet. She does not write a lot about her feelings. Instead, she remains practical and positive throughout her cancer diagnosis and treatment. I consider this to be very helpful for readers who are undergoing their own cancer experiences and who want level-headed information in an atmosphere of realistic optimism.

This book is very helpful in that it signposts readers to interesting and helpful sources of help and support. Useful for friends, family and carers is a special section on 'what not to say to someone with cancer' and tips for buying gifts for someone undergoing treatment. There is a lot of interesting detail about hair loss and the options available. Jackie chose not to wear scarves or to use a 'chemo-cap', and she owned three wigs, the reasons for which are carefully explained. There is useful information on wig care, and scalp care too.

I recommend this book to anyone whose life is being touched by cancer, especially breast cancer.

Former health professional, friend, carer (56-65) (June 2016)

This follows Jackie Buxton's journey from diagnosis, through surgery, chemotherapy, and other drug treatments, to life after treatment. Her final chemotherapy treatment was in June 2014. It will be particularly useful for those recently diagnosed and facing surgery and chemotherapy or other drug treatments, and for those who have already started treatment. It is also valuable for partners, carers, family, and friends.

It is very easy to read and understand. Jackie explains technical words as she writes, and the appendix also explains technical terms and has links to useful websites. She often provides links in the text to useful websites or to relevant articles she has found during her research. Some of these are very interesting and may provide information not generally known about, for example about parabens, (additives used in toiletries).

Jackie's style is informal and very friendly. The book is based on her blog posts and in her introduction, she describes the aim of the blogs as "calming a few nerves for those in a similar position who are perhaps a little further back on the road". She also talks of hoping to inform readers and make them smile. She achieves this. Although there is plenty of serious content, she certainly made me smile!

It is quite appealing to look at, with colourful informal lettering on the cover (as well as an illustration of a teapot of course!). There is a clear index and the contents are detailed, making it very easy to find a topic. It is also easy to dip in and read a short section. There are three pages of small photos. One of these shows the progress of the author's hair growing back after chemo, and one is of the annual Haven fashion show that she took part in.

I really like Jackie's friendly style. She writes clearly and with humour, even when discussing very serious issues, e.g. the fear of secondary cancer. Although I am a lot older than she is, I felt she connected with me as a reader. Because much of the book is originally blog posts, she is writing about events as they occur, which gives the writing a feeling of immediacy. She explains the reasons for her decisions, for example whether to have chemo before or after the mastectomy, but is always very careful to explain the alternatives, acknowledging the range of opinions about certain decisions. She writes well about her fears, about complications after surgery, and about the side-effects of treatments. Some of these experiences have been very difficult, but Jackie also describes the things that helped her, for example white sauce was one of the only things she could eat during the very first days after her chemo. She is also very encouraging. Though she details how awful she felt at times, she is also very clear that this difficult period passes and describes how the side-effects improved. She offers practical information. She describes the changes she has made in her own life and the reasons for these. Towards the end, there is a list of 12 things that people did for her during treatment that she found really helped; this would be useful for any friends or family members to read. There is also a chapter on positive stories about survival that she has been told about.

This book would be valuable for someone going through breast cancer treatment, and for their partners, friends, and family members. It offers information to women coping with breast cancer and is very supportive in its approach. I definitely recommend it to others affected by breast cancer.

Breast cancer survivor (66-75) (June 2016)

The breast cancer pathway is long and complicated, and when in shock from their diagnosis, people with cancer and their families often struggle to understand fully all the elements. At home, questions, worries and fears may arise and, with nobody knowledgeable to ask, may result in a spiral of stress. Although it is aimed at patients, I found it a great insight into the reality of the disease. Terms such as Tamoxifen and Herceptin can be confusing for students and the author has simplified these concepts into understandable chunks, useful for anyone who needs to develop their understanding of the process from diagnosis to follow-up.

Nobody is as informed as those who have experienced the process from start to end, so this book would be a fantastic reference for any queries someone may have throughout their cancer journey. The author is frank and honest about her experience, holding back no details as unpleasant as they may be; however, this implies that the positives she encountered along the way are just as viable. In terms of keeping control of mental health during diagnosis, treatment and follow-up, this book provides invaluable reassurance that everyone has dark days, but that inspiration and positives can flourish despite hardships. Whilst accepting that the emotions surrounding a cancer diagnosis must be felt, Jackie Buxton has plenty of tips for keeping a strong positive attitude at different stages of the journey.

The layout is very helpful. Her story is readable from start to finish, from diagnosis to retrospective discussion of the disease. The content is arranged in sections so if the reader has an interest, wigs for example, they can go directly to it. It is not necessary to read the entire book if only parts are of interest to you. This would also be useful if having read the book, you want to reread any part.

Throughout, the author manages to explain the different elements of her disease and treatment very well. People are often overwhelmed by the amount of information and technical phrases thrown at them on diagnosis. Jackie Buxton has experienced this overload and defines all the complicated jargon in a way that she would have liked it explained to her at the time. A glossary summarises all the specialised phrases used throughout the book and is useful as a quick reference.

A word I feel best describes this book is “friendly”. The title and cover are comforting – most people relate a cup of tea with a sense of normality and being involved socially, at a time when they feel isolated and scared. The font is simple, and each chapter is broken into easily read chunks. There are photos of the author at various stages of hair growth, from the bald period, to when her hair started to grow back enthusiastically. I feel this would be a real encouragement to women who face the loss of their hair, as there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The sections discussing the various elements of the chemotherapy process are very useful. Patients often come to us having already completed chemotherapy and we focus on the radiation delivery rather than what the patient has already been through. However, Jackie’s account of the delivery and side effects of chemotherapy have highlighted the importance of a more rounded knowledge of the breast cancer pathway, because the completion of treatment does not instantly heal the psychological impact of hair loss and illness. Patients talk of their experience with previous treatment – surgery, chemotherapy, and hormone therapy – and this book has equipped me to speak with more knowledge about these topics. It also portrays

how it is possible to cope emotionally with a diagnosis of breast cancer. Often using humour and witty observations, the author portrays herself as a character who is easy to relate to; this may alleviate some of the reader's potential loneliness, as they realise others also must deal with the news that they have cancer.

Although the book is very useful in other areas, radiotherapy is not discussed at length (I may be biased). The book goes into detail about other treatment options, but if you have questions about radiotherapy, other reading material may be required. The author has provided links to various useful websites however, such as Cancer Research UK, which would explain this treatment and side effects in more detail. Perhaps also, a more detailed chapter on how Jackie's family coped with her diagnosis would have been useful, as patients often fear the impact that cancer will have on their loved ones.

This is easy to read, and the author gives an honest and inspirational account of how she dealt with her diagnosis. Although she describes times of darkness, her book radiates positivity, and by the end summarises that it is okay to not be continually upbeat; life is not the same again even after a cure. The life-changing nature of cancer can be overwhelming, but it can result in positive changes, in terms of what is important, hopes and dreams and, as Jackie demonstrates in the writing of this book, cancer can fuel people to help others in their time of need.

Student therapeutic radiographer (Under 25) (June 2016)

This is most useful for realising that life goes on and how cancer may affect you and other people. It is uplifting, humorous, honest, and practical, and reassures you that you are not alone.

The author is a patient and uses language that is easy to understand. She breaks down the content into short chunks so that the reader can digest each subject before moving on. The appendix is useful to help readers understand any terminology. The cover is modern and looks like any other book you may find on the bookshelf, with an inviting layout and illustrations – the photos add a personal touch. The author gives you lots of information without making it feel like an information leaflet. Overall it is very useful, and I recommend it.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (May 2016)

I like everything about this book. It is very appealing – I knew just by the look of it that it was going to be a good book, and it was. It is very easy to understand; the language is perfect.

It is useful for all aspects of living and coping with breast cancer, covering many feelings, emotions, and physical aspects. The author has also included plenty of websites. I recommend it.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (May 2016)

I loved this book from start to finish and will recommend it to others facing cancer. It is useful for all aspects: wellbeing; the process; the emotional aspects. It all applied to me other than the specific breast cancer references. It is nice to be reassured by her feelings; when you go through it you can feel you are the only one.

It flows logically and it all makes sense; where the author talks about some very specific things she does explain. It looks nice and it is written in an honest and clear way, very easy to read and understand and detailed enough to get a real feel for her situation. I also like the fact that she has been so honest and not shied away from the real detail and some of the worst parts of this disease.

Anyone could read this book. As someone who has had cancer, I can make lots of comparisons, but I can also see family and friends reading it to learn more about the trials and tribulations of having cancer. I would most definitely recommend it to others with cancer and those helping someone through a tough time with any cancer. I particularly like the following chapters: What do you say; Chemo brain; My new normal; Beyond the fear; and Ditching the wig.

Living with mediastinal large B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma (26-35) (April 2016)

This is a positive and frank account, explaining far more than professionals ever can! It has a broad appeal; anyone can gain from reading it. It is useful for any stage, even for those who have not yet received a definite diagnosis. I love the whole book; it is a well-documented and complete journey.

As a health professional, I feel that the author balances the medical issues and terminology well. The glossary is useful and the use of analogies throughout the book gives greater understanding. The book is well laid out and the front cover is simple but humorous and reflects the author's personality well! The author engaged me from the beginning and I read it from cover to cover in one sitting. It was difficult to put down as I shared her journey through the text.

Should I ever be in the author's position, I feel I am prepared emotionally by this book. I have the medical knowledge, but the raw emotion and useful websites enhance this book. I will certainly advise my patients to read it! It is a book that I will read again and again, and I would be honoured to meet this lady!

Health professional (46-55) (April 2016)

This is useful for anyone, but especially someone with breast cancer, for all aspects of living and coping with breast cancer, especially how to cope during and after treatment. It's easy to understand; the language is colloquial, like talking to a friend.

The author starts with diagnosis – where the process starts for all cancer patients – and progresses through treatment, to what to expect when treatment finishes. She tries hard to put a positive spin on diagnosis and treatment and had me laughing and crying in equal measure.

This book mirrors what I went through and has some useful tips and suggestions for how to cope with things like hair loss. It also recommends some useful websites for help when treatment is over. I wish I'd had it to hand at the time of my treatment. It is very useful to dip into and to keep for future reference.

Living with breast cancer (46-55) (April 2016)

This is a brilliant book, most useful for general day-to-day living with breast cancer. It is perfect for someone going through breast cancer, but also good for anyone on the sidelines to get an insight into life with breast cancer.

The cover is simple but appealing and the general layout is good; the typeface and size are perfect, and there are several black-and-white photos. The author writes well and explains everything well in the text.

I like everything about this book. I really enjoyed reading it; the author writes well about her breast cancer experience and has a positive outlook. Because she lives near me and used the same centre and hospital (some of her nurses were mine as well), I could identify with much that she writes. It really touches on the whole experience and I will pass it on to a friend who is going through it now.

Had breast cancer (46-55) (March 2016)

This book is ideal for someone who has just found out they will need chemo, or for someone going through chemo. However, even someone like me, who finished treatment a while ago, may find it helpful in places, particularly if they are hormone positive and on Tamoxifen.

The author takes you through her treatment and therefore the order is quite logical. She does occasionally drop backwards or forwards, but this is not confusing. The tone is conversational, and the book is very easy to understand. Even those recently diagnosed and with limited knowledge will find it straightforward, perhaps because it is based on the author's blog. There is a glossary but it's not essential. The cover is bright and simple and the title eye catching. The short sections make it ideal for someone with limited concentration or who is feeling tired due to treatment.

This is the book I wish I'd read when I was first diagnosed and facing the knowledge that within a month I would be starting chemo. There isn't much medical or technical information, but the author talks honestly about her feelings and what was important to her as she went through treatment. It is engaging, entertaining, short and punchy. I saw much of my own circumstances in what she wrote, and she had some very similar views. How she dealt with "The Fear" of recurrence is particularly reassuring.

I recommend it to anyone having chemo. My one hesitation is for those who are less positive or who are struggling emotionally; they could see it as setting quite high standards of how to deal with chemo, which they might struggle to live up to.

Inflammatory breast cancer survivor (36-45) (March 2016)

I could not put this book down. It is such a lovely book, a very honest piece of writing that has come from the author's experience, with lots of humour and information that can help during or after treatment. It would be suitable for most people.

It is extremely easy to understand. The author explains things as she writes and there is also an appendix of information at the end. The modern cover is cheerful and appealing and there are no issues with the quality or layout. There are only a few pictures, but they are useful.

It is 'spot on' about lots of emotions and issues with cancer treatment. Although truthful, it does not darken your day and is helpful in many ways. One other plus: all proceeds from the sale goes to three charities (Breast Cancer Now, The Haven, and The Royal Ogden Macmillan Centre) – how brilliant is that?!

I really enjoyed it. It has lots of information and a lot that I identified as being very familiar! I highly recommend it.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (March 2016)

This is most useful for people with breast cancer, their partners/carers and family and friends. I don't think it would be for anyone else as you need to have experienced it, or know someone that is going through it, to compare experiences.

It is generally in a good order, but it does seem to go back to topics that have been mentioned before, so there is a bit of repetition. It is very well written and everything about the procedures and process is correct; it was horrible to hear that the author suffered with the surgery. The only error I noticed is the reference to hot flushes and weight gain; this only happened to me after I had the hysterectomy but not during cancer itself. Also, the Chillow Pillow could have been described as a cool pillow.

The cover is vibrant and colourful, and the text is very easy to read. I like the links to the websites for information to search. The pictures are great; it is nice to see her enjoy herself towards the end of treatment.

I like that it is true to my experience of breast cancer; it is about what happens, the gruelling treatment and how you feel after it has all finished. I wasn't too sure about the poem; I didn't see how it connected to what was happening.

This is a brilliant book, great value for money and Jackie is a great writer. It is very useful for anyone who wants to know how things work through diagnosis and treatment and side effects, how you have to deal with it, how family and friends cope and where to go online for further information. It brought back sad moments, but I enjoyed reading it.

Had breast cancer seven years ago (46-55) (February 2016)

This honest account of having breast cancer treatment is most helpful to the patient or their carer. It is very easy to understand and, although there are medical terms, the language is appropriate for the intended audience and there is a glossary. It is a very appealing book; I couldn't put it down. I like the way it is set out, very informal.

It is a funny book even though it is tackling breast cancer. I found it upbeat and positive. It's not too heavy but still very informative. I like the humour and the matter-of-fact way it is written. It is full of facts and website links, but it is a relaxed read. The only thing I don't like is the position of the page numbers on the inside of the page.

Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (February 2016)

This is a candid account of how breast cancer diagnosis, the treatment regime and the cancer noise take over life. Jackie exudes positivity and determination in her outlook. It is useful for developing an understanding of what it feels like to receive the devastating news of a cancer diagnosis and how it feels when undergoing treatment. Jackie articulates the emotional impact of illness, often overlooked. It is an insightful read for family and friends, to understand some of the emotional challenges and to identify some practical ways to offer support. It is also very relevant for someone affected by cancer more generally, not specifically breast cancer, offering some reassurance around the common feelings and fear evoked by diagnosis and treatment. (There are no scary statistics in case you are wondering).

The book is circa 200 pages in length and written in an easily digestible way. The content is broken into chapters that logically flow from diagnosis through treatment, to beyond. The comprehensive contents page enables the reader to dip in and out of relevant sections, and the appendix has a comprehensive glossary and links to relevant organisations and charities. The cover design conveys the tone of the book and the author tells her story in a way you'd imagine her recounting it to a friend over coffee – matter of fact, and with plenty of humour.

I like the positivity that exudes in the way Jackie tells her story and admire the way she has seemingly got on with day-to-day life (family life, progressing her career and undertaking sporting endeavours) whilst persevering with the treatment regime. I like the way she articulates how the cancer noise and fear never leaves you as a patient even when treatment appears to be progressing well. I could relate to Jackie's reference to Julia Donaldson's children's book "A squash and a squeeze"; when you are faced with a cancer diagnosis, and all that comes with it in terms of the emotional drain and the practicalities of treatment, it can seem inconceivable that it can fit in alongside juggling family life and existing commitments, but somehow it does.

Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (December 2015)



This book helped me to understand very much more how my friend was feeling. I have never known how best to help her, and Jackie has written down her feelings in a way that my friend may not feel she can express to me. I think it will also be good for someone with breast cancer, although it depends on the individual; the open style may be too much for some people in the early stages. It is most useful for what to say and not say. Jackie explains how difficult comments made from kindness may be for people with cancer. It is also good for some tips that I passed on to my friends, for example 'safe' websites and free make-up lessons.

The book is based on extracts from a blog written by the author. The extracts are in chronological order and the book is very easy reading – it is split into small sections and all terms are clearly explained. Jackie is a normal person, like anyone else diagnosed with cancer, she is not a doctor. The colourful cover and nice typeface make it almost fun. The author is positive and upbeat and uses humour well. There is nothing really to dislike; some of it is a little repetitive, but this is true to the blog style.

It gave me a much better insight into how my friend may be feeling so may be useful for friends and family trying to understand the complicated emotions of a cancer patient. It is enjoyable and easy to read, presented in a light-hearted manner, but still with the respect required. Some of the detail may not appeal to a patient in the early stages. Everything has a positive spin, but not everyone may want the detail.

**Friend of breast cancer patient, daughter of bowel cancer survivor (26-35)
(October 2016)**

This brings together a series of blogs from a woman who was undergoing treatment for breast cancer and includes updated entries and information after she completed treatment. As such, it is a great insight for anyone going through treatment for breast cancer and would also help their friends/relations/carers learn more about what they are experiencing. I'm not a breast cancer patient, but I found much overlap with my own experience (side effects, hair loss, the emotional side of diagnosis), so it could also be helpful to those experiencing other cancers.

It generally provides one lady's (very honest!) perspective on her experiences, so is useful for getting an idea of what you might experience during treatment, if you have that to come, and an understanding of some of the choices you might have to make during treatment. For example: decisions about whether to use a cold cap; whether to have chemotherapy then surgery or vice versa; her thoughts about the available options for reconstructive surgery; and many other points. The author is very clear on her decisions, but also clear that others might choose differently. This is helpful, giving an "if I knew then what I know now" perspective, and taking away some of the mystery (and hopefully, fear) from these choices.

Because the book brings together blogs written during treatment, it follows the chronological course of treatment. This makes good sense from the reader's perspective; the updates added when the book was put together tie things together.

The writing style is informal and conversational, which makes the book easy to read. The appendix of definitions and the links to websites of some of the major support organisations might be useful for some readers.

In general, the book is an appealing and easy read. I found the font size a bit large and informal looking (perhaps to illustrate the conversational tone of the content), but that's just personal preference. I'm sure others would like this style and find it less intimidating and friendlier than more formal books on the subject. There aren't many illustrations, but there are some photos.

Overall, I found this a very easy read that really 'got' what it was like from the cancer-patient's point of view. I am not a breast cancer survivor, but the author's experiences reflected much my own experiences with cancer treatment, and I appreciated her honesty and positive outlook. I also really like the final section of the book, which includes positive stories and experiences from others.

This is a good read, either at the start of treatment to get an idea of what to expect, or in stages as treatment progresses and the reader experiences the same things as the author. It provides facts from the author's own experience of treatment, and emotional support in terms of the author's ability to reflect what the reader is experiencing. I didn't spot any factual inaccuracies; however, as the book is reporting one person's experience, this will certainly differ from the experiences of others.

This book would be a good choice for those affected by breast cancer, or even other cancers. It is an informal read written by a patient, so is less technical than other information and provides a real person's perspective, advice, humour, and optimism regarding their experiences.

Leukaemia survivor (26-35) (September 2016)

This is useful mainly for those with breast cancer, but it will also be a good source of information for anyone, without bogging them down in medical terminology. It will help people understand what it really means to be diagnosed with cancer and the immediate impact of a cancer diagnosis on someone's life.

It is very simple to understand, from a cancer perspective and as a memoir in general. It is not heavy on medical jargon and there is a useful glossary for those who are not familiar with cancer jargon. There is the odd proof-reading error. At times, it does not feel that the content flows in chronological order, maybe because the book is based on blogs. It may also be intentional; I just prefer to read about things in a chronological order so that I can trace someone's journey.

It is an appealing book. The cover design is simple, but I like it. The title is interesting – I never put chemo and tea together but that is just me – and would start a conversation. The quality of paper is good. The font is nice, almost quirky and I like it. The layout is uncluttered which is important for me as I tend to shy away from tiny font size and cluttered spacing; I think I suffer from cluttered-spacing-phobia/paranoia when it comes to books.

The author, Jackie, is a terrific writer. If there is a book that has the attitude to weave humour in the messy and sad business of cancer, this is the one! Keep those tissues handy; you will need them while laughing hard. I like the clarity of expression and thought. I could relate to most of the things in the book as I had a similar experience, except the mastectomy. I also like that the chapters are short, and it is easy to dip in and dip out. I like the chatty, fun style of writing.

I believe that our experiences shape us and therefore I would have liked to know how Jackie, the person, changed because of cancer. Perhaps she didn't change but I would like to see that acknowledged. I had my cancer diagnosis almost four years ago, and as times passes, I realise that the impact of cancer is not just immediate but long term. In fact, I find rebuilding a life after cancer at least as hard as going through it. Any book published soon after diagnosis falls short on capturing the longer-term details. As I write, I am grossly aware that my own book (published in 2015) falls in the same category; from the point of view of sharing an experience I believe that it is insufficient information for the readers to understand the huge impact of cancer.

This is a useful book. While going through chemotherapy, I read a book that was brilliantly written but was so depressing. I was not sure why I put myself through the pain of reading it. If you want to know about someone else's experience, this book will not make you sad; it will make you chuckle and will help you learn useful information at the same time. In my humble opinion, there should be a sequel or a revised edition where we get to read Jackie's experience over the next few years. Do you reckon it is fair to deprive readers of such brilliant writing? Thank you for sharing your story, Jackie. I wish you good health, happiness, and tea galore!

Cured of breast cancer; diagnosed in September 2012 (36-45) (July 2016)

This is a valuable insight into living with chemotherapy, told with great humour and warmth. It is certainly useful for handling feelings that you have lost your femininity post mastectomy and shows that you can still be attractive in other ways.

It is very easy to understand, and the blog/diary format helps the flow of information that the author wants to put across. I found the chapter about chemo brain particularly good. I did not have conventional chemotherapy, but the author raises issues that I could identify with, such as loss of appetite.

I love this book, especially the easy going reading style, Jackie talks about her breast cancer with humour and warmth and there are plenty of laugh-out-loud anecdotes. I like the chatty informality. Jackie tells her story in a relaxed and informal style that makes an emotive and difficult subject easier to tackle. I love the blog/diary format and suggest that this easy flowing style will appeal to a wide range of people.

Living with skin cancer (46-55) (June 2016)

This is an insight into how a young woman's life changed following her diagnosis of breast cancer. Each diagnosis will be different, but the topics discussed will help a breast cancer patient build a picture of what to expect; they will also help carers gain a better understanding of the emotions and journey that the patient may experience.

The author deals with several topics in a helpful and logical order – mainly in the order that patients may experience them, such as surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy – and provides hints and tips that she found useful during treatment. She also lists charities and support networks in the Yorkshire area, which were very helpful as I also live in the area. It is very easy to understand, and technical words are explained in a glossary. Certain words and topics are also discussed in further detail in the text. It looks appealing, friendly, and easy to pick up and you can read small chunks without feeling the need to read large chapters all at once.

This book deals with the hard reality of a breast cancer diagnosis, something that many of us think will never happen to us, particularly young women – surely it only happens to older women. However, whilst it provides a great insight into a variety of topics, from treatment, through side effects, to life after diagnosis and support networks, the author manages to do it in a humorous, but sensitive, way.

As a breast cancer patient who had just been diagnosed when I read this book, the thing I like most about it is the humour that the author incorporates in a very sensitive way. She manages to discuss daunting subjects in a light-hearted way; I chuckled on many occasions. I experienced a wide range of emotions while reading, including laughter, tears, apprehension, fear, and hope. I took comfort from reading about someone's experience. It certainly provided me with an insight of what was possibly to come as part of my treatment and I would recommend it in the future.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (May 2016)

This book is useful for the whole journey. It covers the topic well and expresses the feelings throughout. It is well explained and easy to follow and I like the layout.

It covered most of my experiences and how I felt before, during and afterwards. However, cancer shows you who your true friends are. Perhaps the author did not have the same experience, but at times support wasn't forthcoming from people I thought were good friends. This book may help people deal with their fears and worries about how to support someone with cancer and remain their friend – just being there is so important. There is also not much about the effect of media stories and how to deal with them – this was something my consultant highlighted. The wig piece is generally good, but I never wore a wig as I hated the feeling on my head and when I looked in the mirror it wasn't me I saw anyway; this aspect is not mentioned.

As a nurse, I feel that this is a useful read for health professionals. It is a completely different experience when it happens to you and many of the issues are not covered in training, for example how you feel, what makes you happy or sad, what to say.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (May 2016)



This chatty and sometimes light-hearted and funny book might help cheer a carer on. It is distilled from a blog and by its very nature is a writing patchwork. It uses simple everyday language and employs a friendly and humorous approach. It is easy to read as it comes in bite-sized chunks. There is little of a technical nature but there is a useful appendix. The cover is modern, the paper good quality, and the font clear.

However, I feel it is lacking in substance and detail in places; many aspects are skated over, and some important ones barely addressed. In many ways, it feels like half a book with the emphasis almost solely on the writer's treatment for cancer. With so little content written before and around diagnosis, I found it hard to empathise.

So many books these days start out as blogs and I am not sure that the conversion always works. I wonder if the writer benefits more than the reader in that writing the blog is cathartic at a difficult time. Most blog/book publications seem to be written by patients with a large network of supportive families and friends and near-perfect lives; this does not mirror everyone's experience. This book, which follows that pattern, does not add anything particularly new or insightful. The only part that did resonate with me was when the author discusses life after active treatment the feeling of flatness, of being emotionally drained and scared, the expectation to feel elated at surviving and the guilt for not being able to rejoice. I am sure that this book will appeal to many who may be looking for something supportive in a more light-hearted form, but I guess that it is just not the right book for me.

Breast cancer patient (66-75) (June 2016)

This will be most useful for someone living with breast cancer. The author has been through all the things that anyone diagnosed with breast cancer must go through, so it could help ease all the daunting information they receive. You do get to know a bit too much, and it does get a bit upsetting, but you find strength!

At the end of the book, the appendix explains everything that people might not have understood, and the author also includes detail of cancer charities and helpful websites; she even mentions the amazing Macmillan charity! The appendix is very interesting, especially to people who are unsure about what they've just read and are wanting to know more; it's also nice if family or friends reading sign up to a charity such as Anthony Nolan and register to donate bone marrow or register to donate blood; it's amazing what a bit of information can do!

What I like about this book is that you gain so much information that you feel like you're going through this journey with the author and you're there with her every step of the way. When I was going through this with my own mother, I hadn't a clue what was happening, and a book like this would've helped so much, not just for me but for my mother; during her diagnosis, we were all clueless and nothing was sinking in, but this book tells you how it is and is just so helpful.

My mother has breast cancer (Under 25) (April 2016)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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