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CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



POG. Weathering the storm (2014)

Thornton S.

Cirencester: Mereo Books, 2014.

228pp.

ISBN 9781861513885.

£10.50.

Average star rating 3.8 (out of 5)

**Macmillan Cancer Support
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ**

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I'm not sure how useful this will be for someone with lymphoma apart from to identify with the author's experiences. It is very easy to understand. I like the colour, the feel and the style of the chapter headings. It's a really easy book to pick up.

Lived experience of acinic cell carcinoma (36-45) (July 2019)

This is very easy to understand and a pleasure to read. The author's tone is very welcoming and puts you at ease whilst reading the book. It would be useful to read at any stage of lymphoma as it goes into detail about all stages of the disease.

Living with myelodysplastic syndrome (56-65) (June 2019)

Hats off to Samantha. This book is written well. It is a pleasure to read and I could pick up from where I left off very easily. It is an appealing book; bright yellow is a happy colour. As you read, you will realise the significance of the boat and POG!

I felt privileged to read Samantha's inspiring account. It is a touching journey and a strong battle from diagnosis to remission ten years later. It provides information and highlights the power of unconventional treatment (meditation, mindfulness, diet) combined with the power of new-age science and stem cell research.

A relative of someone who died from a brain tumour (26-35) (September 2016)



This is suitable for many different readers as the author talks about how she deals with lymphoma and how her family copes, how others helped her with the treatment and recovery process, and how it affected family members.

She starts with some background, then describes diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. Treatment is covered well, and the discussion of alternative treatments may open the eyes of other patients, either as an alternative or alongside conventional treatment. There are quite a lot of different people in the book – friends, family, children – and

sometimes it is a little hard to keep up with all the names, especially as the author has nicknames or childhood names for some people.

I like that the author discusses alternative treatments and how this ran parallel to conventional treatment. She talks about how, although hard, meditation was a benefit once she was open to the idea. She is honest and truthful about the impact of treatment on her and her family and children, including alternative treatments.

It's a useful read because the author explains several treatments and the pros and cons of her choices. She's very honest about how she deals with cancer and how the treatment affects her physically and mentally, and how she struggles with alternative treatment. It will give others an insight to trying other treatments alongside standard treatment. In some parts it's a bit lengthy about one area but I understand that the author wants to explain fully why she goes down that route. The opportunity to travel to far-off countries to aid recovery is wonderful, but not an option for everyone; however, as it was one of the key factors it was important to write about.

I enjoyed this book and will recommend it to others; four stars is a fair reflection of the book, style of writing and content. It took me a while to get into it but once I did, I found it interesting. I have passed it on to my sister who has recently been diagnosed with, and had treatment for, non-Hodgkin lymphoma; I think it will resonate with her, with regards to how she dealt with and felt about the treatment she received.

Relative of someone living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (46-55) (May 2018)

It is quite unusual to find a cancer book that talks about alternative or complementary treatments, so it might be useful for those who wish to do something similar. It may be suitable for someone just diagnosed or who has a family member just diagnosed. It reads well, and the author explains unusual terms. It is logical, in as much as she starts with diagnosis and ends with being NED, but in between it meanders slightly. It is a nice size, easy to carry around, and not too heavy. I like the plain simple cover.

The author describes alternative and complementary treatments, and this may be useful to others who want to follow a similar path. I found this aspect very interesting. However, I did not warm to the author at all. She comes across, to me at least, as self-centred. Everyone – family and close friends – rally around and support her, yet she doesn't seem to appreciate it. She talks about a flat in the city and going on retreats, hardly something most cancer patients can do. If she had to struggle as a single mum, living in a damp flat, and having to catch three buses to hospital for treatment, she might understand how most cancer patients struggle. I'm sorry if this sounds bad, but I just couldn't empathise with her. The book is interesting from the aspect of the treatments she pursued, but as a person I felt next to nothing for her.

Living with long-term side-effects of womb cancer treatment (46-55) (March 2018)

This is suitable for anyone with lymphoma. The author writes about her experiences of lymphoma, how it affects her and others in her life, and how they help each other.

She describes what she goes through, what happened when she was diagnosed, the treatments, how it affected her physically and emotionally, and how she lived with lymphoma from the initial stages on. It is very easy to understand. The words are explained in the text so no need for a glossary. There are no photos, contents pages, and no reference section.

It will appeal to most people with lymphoma. The author describes her emotions day by day (anger, wanting to run away, not being able to cope), through to her family and friends, and having a good outcome. I like how she describes her condition in a way that you can understand, even if you have never heard of it. She opens up about her life and the effect that the cancer has on her and those around her. However, it is a bit long winded and can be hard going in places. Some people may be interested in reading about the people who have helped her and the different methods of help and meditation techniques, but others could find it boring.

I have had relatives who have had cancer (36-45) (November 2017)



Samantha Thornton was diagnosed with follicular lymphoma and Stage 4 large B-cell lymphoma. Her book is easy to understand. The cover is pleasingly yellow, the paper good quality and there's a nice photo of Samantha as she completes a charity sail, raising thousands of pounds after her partial breakdown and diagnosis of PTSD, a result of her cancer experience. Fifty per cent of the royalties go to charity and she has raised thousands of pounds for research and an alternative therapy centre.

Like Samantha, I had RCHOP as part of my stage 4 treatment, but I struggled with this book and think it will terrify some people. It gives a frightening and negative view of treatment. I was prescribed the same regime at a similar age and didn't find it as horrific. It might be useful for a health professional, to see how terrifying some people find treatment. It also shows how dangerous certain 'alternative treatments' can be, so it could be useful as a warning to research alternative therapies thoroughly.

Much is negative and depressing. Samantha seems to have been forced by friends and family into meditation and alternative therapies, as well as diets she hated. She spends much time sobbing, in agony, or extremely weak and miles from her children, in mental and physical anguish. Then there are the retreats. The four weeks in Thailand left her weak and sobbing on the shoulders of others also seemingly going through hell. One retreat insisted on calling her 'Not Good Enough' for the duration of the experience (even making her wear it as a badge), resulting in her lying, sobbing on the floor. None of these treatments cured her as she hoped. One alternative therapist told her that cancer is 'a slow suicide' and that she got it because it was 'her fault'. As far as I know, these beliefs aren't upheld by oncologists. There's also a potential trigger for some readers, as Samantha makes the harrowing decision to have a termination during treatment. The only reprieve seems to come when she is diagnosed with PTSD and a partial nervous breakdown by a cancer psychiatrist.

She speaks of writing the book as having been cathartic for her; I hope it was but it's a tough read. As a psychotherapist, I wonder how it will help anyone about to embark on cancer treatment in general and on this regime in particular. No chemo regime is a breeze but her experience of RCHOP was torture compared to mine. It also acts as a huge warning to anyone considering alternative therapies: some are clearly not helpful, in fact they are downright dangerous. One person is anecdotally referred to as having been cured of cancer by meditation alone, which I found to be a concern.

This is just one person's view of cancer treatment. It was not my experience and I'd caution anyone reading this before to treatment not to assume they will go through the same grinding hell as Samantha. Many people will be genuinely frightened and I'm not sure that is helpful. It's not a balanced view, just one person's experience. My concern is some people might be too scared to undergo the treatment after reading this. I think if I'd read this before I embarked on my chemo regime, I'd have declined treatment and run screaming for the hills.

Burkitt lymphoma survivor (46-55) (January 2019)

This is written from the point of view of a survivor, with an emphasis upon alternative methods to combat cancer. It could be read by anyone to gain an insight into different ways to tackle an illness. The author demonstrates persistence, determination, survival, and acceptance. It is easy to understand with little unexplained technical language. It's a nice size (smaller than average paperback) and easy to read with a good-size font.

It is a good read. I wanted to know more. I like the author's frankness and how she describes ALL her feelings including the negative ones; she holds nothing back. However, I felt uncomfortable reading about her experiences of meditation and mindfulness as it was very egocentric and samey even though she reached an acceptance and tolerance of this practice and an understanding.

I might recommend it; it will depend on the reader's mindset and beliefs in alternative therapies. It is good to read what someone who doesn't trust or believe in alternative therapies thought about meditation and mindfulness and how she dealt with them. It is positive, though quite self-centred, and the author was, as she says, "born with a silver spoon in her mouth"; she has privileges that many others will never encounter.

It is interesting that some of her thoughts about being ill, self-worth, for example, are like mine; this demonstrates that cancer touches us all in the same way, regardless of the type or outcome.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (March 2017)



I don't like much about this book. It is easy to understand but unfortunately, it rambles on with no real purpose. The quality of the paper is not good, and the layout is bland with lots of text. POG (this is the author's nickname in case you are as confused as I was), tells the story of her trials following diagnosis of non-Hodgkin lymphoma – this was in 2002, so some of the information is quite dated, although there are no real facts. The author forays into Eastern medicine and meditation so unless you are a fan of this, it doesn't really help.

Lymphoma support worker (46-55) (May 2019)

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.

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