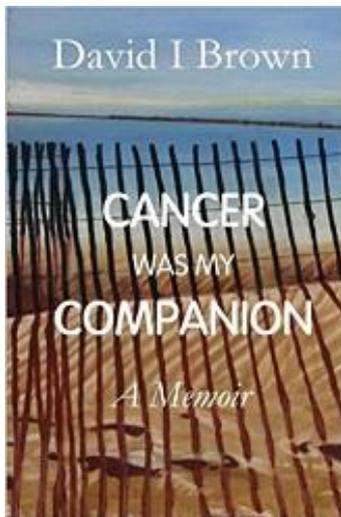


**MACMILLAN  
CANCER SUPPORT**

# BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**Cancer was my companion (2017)**

Brown DI.

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**Average star rating 4.1 (out of 5)**

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Although this is very well written and informative, it would not be good for a newly diagnosed bowel cancer patient. It is very descriptive of the problems the author encountered – in some ways he was unlucky with his treatment and complications – and someone facing treatment may not want to hear about the negatives or the pain in advance! A carer may find it interesting or helpful as it does not hide the impact of diagnosis on patient and carer. It shows how much the patient relies on the carer, especially when that carer is a spouse or partner. It really is a journey together and the author makes it clear how much his wife was a necessary part of his recovery.

The topic is more or less in chronological order, from the initial problem requiring A&E admission and operation, through diagnosis, treatment and further surgery. The author does use some medical language but patients and their immediate family and friends will be familiar with it. The layout and typeface are appropriate and the cover design is a lovely sea view – the author and his wife have a house by the sea that they escape to when they can.

I like the fact that it is written by a very ordinary man with a loving wife, family and friends. Cancer is no respecter of persons – young, old, rich, poor – and we all react and respond in different ways; some people don't want to talk about it whilst others, like the author, do want to be asked and to talk about treatment to anyone willing to listen! He is a very brave man; he survived bowel cancer but it spread to his liver and another operation was his only chance – this was very dangerous. All this time he was coping with a stoma bag as well. You cannot fail to be inspired but it is a difficult book to recommend. I am not keen on the descriptions of some of the operations and treatment; this makes me unable to recommend it to patients unless they have finished treatment. I gave it five stars but not because bowel cancer patients will necessarily find it useful. I have a friend recently diagnosed and now having chemo/radiotherapy prior to surgery and I think it would frighten him rather than help at this early stage. Sometimes it is better not to have too much information. A bit like giving birth – always worse the second time around as you know what to expect! Reading any book by a survivor can be inspirational when read in the right context and at the right time for the patient. A carer will know if it is a suitable read for their patient.

**Carer of husband with prostate cancer (66-75) (August 2018)**

The author was diagnosed with colon cancer at age 57. It was treated by surgery and chemotherapy, apparently successfully. However, a few months later, a CT scan showed secondary cancer in the liver, necessitating more chemotherapy and surgery. The author, who managed to carry on working for much of the time he was being treated, is now in remission.

The narrative is chronological, setting out the steps on his journey and describing his reactions and those of others around him. There are good summaries of hospital life and processes, as well as the resulting elations and frustrations – the latter necessitating some strong language! There is great attention to detail and clear explanations of things such as: life with a stoma bag; insertion and removal of PICC lines; side effects of chemotherapy; coping with a take-home chemotherapy pump; receiving radiotherapy; impact of the many hospital procedures; and the (inevitable) wait for the delivery of drugs before being discharged! The author also describes the mental and emotional effects of diagnosis, treatment, and interactions with the medical team. The value of support, particularly from family and friends, is emphasised, together with that 'special' relationship with an oncologist. The author also covers self-help, with details of the coping methods he used. One of these was art, and a closing chapter explains the therapeutic benefits derived from painting the picture depicted on the back cover.

It is easy to read with good, clear explanations. The chapters are short and the text is well written, in a down-to-earth style that is easy to read. The book is well presented, on heavy paper and in a good clear font.

A good read, and an accurate portrayal of the likely experiences of a bowel cancer patient, including some of the issues that are likely to be encountered, often with practical suggestions on how they might be handled. As such, it will be of interest to someone with bowel cancer, their partner, carer, family and friends, or to someone with a general interest in this subject; it will help them prepare

### **Carer for wife who has had bowel cancer twice (66-75) (July 2018)**

This is a great insight from the perspective of a cancer patient. It is informative, and detailed but written with dry humour to 'soften' the sobering subject. It shows how it can make patients feel to watch their family going through the journey with them and that it is ok to feel scared and upset at times throughout the treatment journey.

The author tells his story in a logical order, starting with his symptoms, through treatment, to remission. It is easy to understand and an appealing book apart from the cover, which wouldn't draw my attention.

I very much like the honesty of the author, whether it was about being scared or about the incompetence of some of the nursing staff. It made me feel that my feelings are normal and that it is ok to feel like this. I have recommended it to my husband as I feel it will help him also to understand his feelings.

### **Caring for someone with bowel cancer (36-45) (June 2018)**

This is a well-written, easy to read, honest account of the author's experiences. The correct amount of dark humour prevents it from becoming a maudlin account but highlights the failures and successes in our health care system. It would suit recently diagnosed patients, if they have an appetite to hear the stories of others, and their carers, family, and friends. Health care professionals will benefit also from learning what life is like for the patient; it will hopefully encourage more understanding and empathy. It will be useful from diagnosis, through treatment, to recovery.

I like the style of writing, the honesty and the humour. It is easy to read, relaxed and captivating with just the right amount of pathos and black humour. It follows a logical and chronological order and it is like listening to the author speak, almost like having a conversation with him... one that you don't want to stop. He describes the issues, and treatments with an ease and simplicity that does not warrant further explanation. His language is simple without being patronising.

The imagery on the front is bright and interesting and grabs the attention. The picture is relevant to the story and has a huge impact. The picture on the back is a copy of his painting and is also significant, but doesn't grab the attention in the same way. The book is easy and lightweight to hold; important when a patient has little stamina and possibly problems with neuropathy. It is set out well and the story captivates. It may be worth publishing as an audio versions, to reach a wider audience and allow those unable to read an opportunity to "speak" with David Brown.

I have a close friend with a recent diagnosis of colon cancer and operation to resection his bowel, and his story relates uncannily to Davis Brown's. I gained a clear insight into the problems, fears, and feelings that my friend has already suffered and an excellent insight into what to expect going forward. It has given me empathy and allowed me to anticipate needs and issues and head them off at the pass almost.

This is a sensitively written account of one man's personal journey with cancer He speaks with a candid voice and is unafraid to share his innermost and deepest fears and feelings but has the capacity to make the reader smile. It is not a maudlin account yet is almost cringingly accurate in his description of his treatment at the hands of others. It evokes pride and shame in equal measure for our caring systems but importantly holds up a mirror to other patients enduring uncannily similar experiences. For patients, family and carers it is a must read if only to understand that this is not something that has to be suffered alone. The roller coaster of emotions that comes with a cancer diagnosis and treatment is clearly described and hope falls out of the very pages of the book. It also makes sense of the treatments.

Not everyone wants or needs this amount of detail and honesty and of course it is up to the patient to decide, but nevertheless I would recommend it and let them make the decision. I felt as if I knew the author and wanted to read more about him and his life – I was sorry to finish it! For patients, relatives, or carers who have no knowledge of cancer, its treatment and the effects, it is a must read. David describes his journey, fears, anxieties, and successes with a witty candour, but it is strangely reassuring.

**Friend/carer of a bowel cancer patient (56-65) (November 2017)**

The author describes every aspect of treatment in a way that is easy to understand for patients and carers. He gives an insight into how his family and friends felt and this may help family and friends with their fears and anxieties and to feel less alone or confused. It also gives patients an insight into how carers and relatives feel; they often hide their fears and anxieties giving patients no idea of how they are feeling.

As a patient, I found it very helpful. The author's descriptions of the illness, treatment, and especially the side effects, are very accurate. I know this book would be helpful to carers and relatives as he has detailed his feelings and the feelings of his family and friends, which were often kept hidden from me.

### **Post treatment for bowel cancer spread into the abdominal lymph nodes (46-55) (October 2017)**

This would be useful for anyone with cancer (bowel or any) or those caring for them, especially health professionals – so many symptoms and feelings are ignored until it is too late. It is most useful for understanding symptoms and recognising them, understanding the journey we go through, learning about the daily anxieties, and learning it's ok to ask for help, and cry when needed.

The story flows well and all events are described very well as they happen, from before diagnosis until the present day. It is easy to understand and medical terms and procedures are explained well. The tone is right, making the story appealing, not frightening, to those with the same cancer. It is split up well and the chapters have defined breaks between them. The cover images are great; the author painted them and so they mean more to the story.

I like the honesty of the author about every aspect of his illness. It was easy to relate to. It didn't leave me feeling depressed, scared, or anxious.

### **Living with cancer of the small intestine (jejunal adenocarcinoma) (26-35) (October 2017)**



This book provides a great perspective of a couple going through the trauma of cancer. It is most useful for the treatment of cancer and its effects and would be useful for providing emotional support.

The author goes through the stages of his cancer in order, which makes it easy to follow. I read the Kindle version and it is easy to read and well formatted. There is a small amount of technical medical language, which is sometimes explained.

I like the unique perspective from a working professional with cancer. There is not much to dislike; the author paints the grim scene of cancer quite accurately.

### **Friend of liver cancer patient (Under 25) (August 2015)**

This book would be most helpful for people with bowel cancer (someone just starting their journey or receiving ongoing treatment) or those caring for them. I found it easy to understand; the story of how the journey began and progressed does go back and forth – the order of events is a bit sketchy – and there is no glossary to explain technical terms, but overall, it should be easy for anyone to understand. It's an appealing book, both contents and cover, and I could relate to the tone of the author.

It brought back memories of my experience and that of my mother. The author's experience of a dementia patient on the ward the night before his surgery was identical to mine. When you are waiting for major surgery the next day, the last thing you need is another patient screaming and crying out all night. I wish staff recognised the impact that placing people with dementia on surgical wards has on other patients who are themselves anxious and distressed. His views on telling people about his diagnosis and treatment, however, were opposite to mine. I didn't tell anyone except my husband and told my children the night before my operation. I found it very difficult and was scared to talk about it. I felt people would not want to be around me anymore; my daughter said, "it's as if you are ashamed of it, mum".

In many ways, diagnosis and treatment seem to have moved on (I lost my parents to cancer over 30 years ago, and my experience was 10 years ago). Thirty years ago, we were given no information about prognosis, little about treatment and as a family were not involved at all. My tests and treatment were different; this may be due to a different location, the passing of time, or inaccuracies in how tests, treatments were performed and results given. The other big difference is aftercare. Once I was discharged, I only went back for a colonoscopy five years later; I am happy that this seems to have changed and patients get more aftercare.

I like this book because it showed me that another person's thoughts and feelings about cancer were very like my own and I found it easy to read without it being frightening or depressing. I would recommend it to anyone facing a cancer diagnosis or to others involved in their care.

### **Previous cancer patient (large bowel (56-65) (April 2018)**

This has a wide appeal; the author focuses on his perspective and is open about his experience and feelings but also offers an insight into the impact of cancer on others. It is great for looking back at diagnosis and early treatment when you are coming to terms with it all. The descriptions of diagnosis and treatment echo my experience and provide a good insight into these stages. The author provides great details of a tricky pipe line insertion and struggling to find veins during blood tests; the humour of the day to day and mundane shines through but it is dark in places.

The author shares his rollercoaster of feelings, through initial hospital visits, misdiagnoses and errors, to his eventual diagnosis and feeling of confidence in his oncologist. There are great accounts of waiting for drugs or the results of blood tests to arrive before treatment can start, sad tales from meeting other patients, and candid descriptions of perceived poor support from the health service. It is an easy read in terms of the way it is set out and the language. The tone is engaging and moving. Topics are handled mostly in a logical chronological order from discovery

through treatment. The visuals on the cover are appealing and give a sense of easy reading. The typeface is easy to read and the general layout effective.

Overall, a great read, an emotional, bare and funny account. It is brutally honest and the author describes the full colour of the medical support he received, his feelings through each stage of diagnosis and treatment, and the ups and downs of his day-to-day experiences. It is engaging and humorous, but, while you can empathise with the author, there are also times when it makes you wince. While I can draw parallels with my experience, the author's diagnosis was complicated by medical errors; someone reading this at an early stage might be unduly worried. It is not for the faint hearted

### **Former bowel cancer patient (56-65) (February 2018)**

David Brown tells the story of his journey from diagnosis through to recovery. He explains his thoughts and feelings about his doctors, treatment, family and friends. This makes this book appealing to anyone although it will be most useful for someone living with bowel cancer.

The story is told in a logical order as events happen; David's feelings and those of his family are explained in the same manner. The text is quite easy to understand, only really using technical language when quoting hospital letters or medical explanations. Otherwise, David uses everyday language to describe his condition and treatment. The cover has a simple yet appealing design that takes nothing away from the title, which is also simple and intriguing. The photograph on the front is of a beach with a picket fence that David took in Queensland, Australia and depicts his thoughts of a barrier, which is his cancer, and the clear horizon and sea, which is hope.

All areas of David's life and that of his family and friends are considered during this story and how the cancer affected their actions, thoughts and plans, depicting how all-encompassing a diagnosis like this can be. David, starts his story by explaining a little about himself, his background and his life, which was good and settled. He explains in good detail his feelings on being told he had cancer and is very candid throughout. As the story unfolds, the reader is able to connect with David owing to the frank explanations of how he feels and the way he is treated by various people. You will feel able to laugh and cry during this thoughtful account of his life with cancer. I found the book very enjoyable and David appears very sincere.

### **Family member of someone with bowel cancer (46-55) (December 2017)**

David has everything he could want in life: a large house in a beautiful location; a garden large enough for a marquee; travel to Asia and beyond; a beautiful, devoted wife, and three accomplished daughters. What David doesn't want is cancer, which invades his body, plunging him into an honest and beautifully written account of emotion and despair. His book is compelling, I couldn't put it down. It will help anyone with cancer as it prepares you for the treatment journey. It is particularly relevant to bowel cancer patients as it also covers what may be needed in terms of a stoma.

It is a very appealing book, the journey is beautifully written, with a very easy tone. It is very easy to understand. David goes into technical detail but if you understand doses and medicines you will probably want to know the detail, if not you can skip it.

I like that it is a completely honest account of a devastating change to one's life. It helps you to understand the physical and emotional impact. It is uplifting, gives hope, and is testament to perseverance, courage and love. It could be more informative by giving a full picture of how the journey affects those supporting David. One of the most engaging and enigmatic elements was trying to work out how Grace, David's selfless and stoic wife, coped. Grace is clearly an amazing character and we do glimpse her pain and sadness, but her coping strategies could help so many people in her position. We need the journey from Grace's perspective; a chapter from each of them would be hugely enlightening to couples going through a similar situation.

### **Friends and relatives living with cancer (46-55) (November 2017)**

This is useful for patients from diagnosis to after the end of treatment, as cancer affects you for the rest of your life. It is also useful for health professionals. The author experienced poor treatment from some professionals in the early stages of his diagnosis and it will remind them how their attitude can affect the patient. It is easy to understand, honestly written, factual, and, very importantly, has a basis in the psychological aspects of a cancer diagnosis.

It is a worthwhile read for patients and carers in terms of what to expect following diagnosis, particularly as the author makes the point that the attitude of some health professionals is less than supportive and at times rude; this is something that none of us expects, but many of us experience. My only criticism is that he tends to go off track at times by including his thought patterns and this can be difficult to follow.

### **Colorectal cancer patient currently in remission (56-65) (November 2017)**

As the perspective of someone who has gone on a difficult and painful journey, this book is relevant to anyone who may be a part of that journey: patient; partner; family member; medical staff. It will help to clarify things that are not known until you endure such a difficult journey: understanding what lies ahead; the time to get a diagnosis; the wait for treatment and the anxiety this brings. Then, when treatment begins, again, the time it can take, the exact nature of what to expect medically, but also the mental demons that patients and carers must face when contemplating prognosis.

For the most part, the author begins at the beginning and finishes at the end, and we travel with him on a difficult journey. He explains that, as a scientist, he wants to portray the medical detail accurately, sometimes in agonising detail. His wife, Grace, takes copious notes at each appointment and he has clearly researched extra details about his treatment. The overall impression is that it is factually accurate.

There are one or two aspects – especially in terms of medical procedures or terms – where I got slightly lost and had to look up terms. A glossary would be useful but this is not a major criticism because I could clarify it on Google. The tone is not overly

scientific, David writes with real humanity and humour. I wasn't expecting to laugh out loud, but he manages to introduce levity without digressing from the seriousness of the subject. In fact, this comes as welcome relief to the intensity of the experience.

The book is set out in short chapters (apart from a couple during certain episodes that are longer) and this makes it generally very easy to read. The front and back cover illustrations are explained in the final pages and my advice would be not to try and read on and find out in advance, and let their significance strike you as intended. From a readability point of view, the font is not too small. We do have a picture of the author, but none of his wife or three daughters, who play a major role in his life; it would have brought their characters to life a little had we seen the family portrait he describes having made towards the end of the book.

It is a harrowing and a, quite literally, warts-and-all account of a very difficult journey; David is candid about his emotional condition, his fears, his anger, the mood swings he suffered as he faced the very real possibility of death at different points. He is angry at times – justifiably so given some of the experiences he has and the very variable levels of care he receives – but also gives praise where it is due as his life is in the hands of the surgeons. The aspect that touched me most is the honesty with which he writes, as he comes to terms with his condition and endures enormous mental and physical suffering before finally seeing light at the end of the tunnel. There is nothing really to dislike, apart from the subject. It took a little while to get going for me; I got bogged down in some of the medical terms early on, but I was slowly drawn into David's story, and although we always know there is going to be a happy ending – otherwise there would be no book, to put it bluntly – the subject matter is never going to make this an easy book to read; that is clearly not the idea.

I have – touch every piece of wood in reach – never had cancer, but both parents and my sister have, and to have a first-hand account from someone who has been through and survived that journey touched me in a fundamental way. Part of the motivation for writing his account, aside from the cathartic nature of recording such life-changing episodes, was to offer others in a similar position insights that they can get only from someone who has already trodden this path; the book delivers in that respect. He even includes an advice list for anyone embarking on the same trip.

It is a compelling, if at times uncomfortable, read. David writes with sensitivity, scientific accuracy, and a measured stoicism interspersed with little balloons of black humour that help diffuse the horrors he endures. Through it all, we never lose touch with the person who is suffering and who, ultimately, manages to forge a path through the darkness and back into the light. If I had bowel cancer and was contemplating long-term treatment, would I want to know what lay ahead? Could ignorance be bliss, or at least a way of nullifying excessive anxiety? If that is your approach, then such a graphic account may not help. However, knowledge will help most people to develop coping strategies. Added to which, the fact that David survived and came out of the other end is a major motivational factor in remaining positive-minded. I certainly recommend it for carers and immediate family, to help understand the emotional and physical turmoil that their loved one is suffering.

David takes us from diagnosis, including initial mistakes, on a drawn-out, agonising, voyage of appointments, treatment, recovery, more treatment, waiting, more waiting, spiralling downwards, until he faces life-or-death surgery. At times, he feels almost a spectator and talks with chilling honesty about the mental demons that threaten to derail him. Through it all, we have his relationship with Grace (the foundation stone of his sanity), and the love of his daughters. A part of me wanted to learn more about Grace, see events from her perspective, and learn about the difficulties of being on the outside and keeping going under such difficult circumstances. However, there is a lovely twist at the end regarding David's painting, which helped him cope through the most difficult times. For anyone who has been affected by cancer, whether as patient or carer, this is the kind of book that can make a lasting impression. To understand that through all the pain, frustration, fear, there is a way to retain dignity and humanity and create a lifeline that can eventually take you back to a better place.

**I lost my father to bowel cancer at 13 (he was 48), my sister to breast cancer at 33 (she was 35), my mother to bowel cancer at 39 (she was 78), and other close relatives. Through it all I have developed a coping mechanism based on positive thought and a deep love for my own children (46-55) (November 2017)**

I didn't think that I was going to get on with this book, but I was wrong. David is honest and transparent and says it like it is. There is no "poor me" and he admits that he was not the most pleasant person to be around during treatment. However, he also talks about how much he loves his wife and daughters and how he appreciates their support. Anyone could get something out of this book, with or without cancer.

The book itself becomes more appealing when you realise what the cover is. It is very easy to understand with medical terms explained. The naming of chemotherapy drugs may be useful – not for me as I have no understanding of this aspect yet, but I suppose that for those who are having/have had chemotherapy, it might be useful. The "Help" pages at the back are useful – salient points to remember.

There is a lot of anger, which is channelled and focussed well. I like that David did not shy away from the depression that he had, the blackness and the demon on his shoulder. At last, someone who gets it and understands. I like how he questions what he ought to look like when people say to him that he doesn't look ill. "What do you think I should look like?" And I like the notice that he draws to the importance of the environment for patients. A good, well cared for and designed environment can make all the difference to how patients feel. Maybe red chairs for people with blood cancer is not a good idea. (King's, please take note!)

**Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (September 2017)**



This may be useful for someone with bowel cancer/liver spread. I like the dark humour, and that the author addresses the feeling of isolation on diagnosis but there needs to be more about the procedures, e.g. stoma, colonoscopy scans, and less on the family. I probably won't recommend it. In my opinion it is not a book about bowel cancer and the subsequent difficulties following stoma reversal; there is too much emphasis on the spread of the primary tumour to the liver.

### **Living with bowel cancer (56-65) (October 2018)**

David is enjoying a challenging new career, has a loving wife, a full social life, a wonderful home, and is proud of his grown-up daughters. Then is told he has colon cancer, which spreads to the liver. His life is shaken to the core, peeled back to pure survival. This is his journey; we travel with him on the highs – David realising and developing his creative talents, his loving family and circle of friends – and the lows – weight loss, sleeplessness, fear of a future where his family may have to live without him. It is a journey that offers observations of the medical process from diagnosis, through treatment, to recovery. David shares his keen observations and writes well with warmth and humour, using language that everyone can understand.

It is useful for someone with bowel cancer, but also family and friends. It shows how important a loving family and friends are. It illustrates the importance of love, stability, beauty, and creativity; David's growing commitment to his creative side is unique and the use of his paintings on the cover works well. It is also wonderful that at the end he gives back to the people that helped him. However, it is a white, middle-class perspective. David's partner accompanies him to every hospital visit, and he has a loving family. He receives very good treatment and has a job that is flexible; in any case, he is well-heeled enough to survive. Not everyone will relate to his journey; it is more feel-good than true-grit, more of a gloss than nuggets of wisdom.

### **Bowel cancer patient (46-55) (March 2018)**

This provides an outline of diagnosis and treatment, so would be useful for someone at the start of their journey who wants to know what to expect. It is read like a journal and is set out in manageable chapters. It is easy to understand; the author does not use many technical words and explains everything clearly. The cover looks cheap and off-putting, especially the image and typeface on the back. Otherwise, the book is of reasonable quality and the typeface and font are easy to read.

I like that the author accurately describes the emotional and psychological impact of diagnosis. Occasionally the descriptions of treatment are unclear and, as with all books like this, it is specific to the author's situation. It may be useful to someone with a very similar diagnosis and treatment pathway but it may worry or confuse those having different treatment. I may recommend it to those with a similar diagnosis.

### **Living with stage IV bowel cancer (26-35) (January 2018)**

I have read several memoirs by women living with cancer, so I was particularly pleased to find a book from a male perspective and recommended it to the husband of a friend who had recently been diagnosed with colon cancer. It deals with the overarching questions surrounding diagnosis, such as dying and the emotional response to all that happens. It may prompt discussion between patient and carer, or help patients to feel that their thoughts are shared by others in similar circumstances. The author also references medical procedures that may help someone feel reassured or act as a means of comparison to their own treatment plan.

The memoir is chronological, making it a quick easy read in terms of its style. I did not notice any errors and, as it is a personal account, I could accept that whatever was happening was completely from the author's point of view and his memory of procedures exactly as he wrote it. There is no glossary, but the author explains medical terminology in the text as appropriate. The pace is punchy, moving quickly through events that are described with black humour and clarity. The author does fall into the trap of using stereotypical euphemisms, for example the "fight" with cancer. This terminology has been rejected in recent years by many people living with cancer and feels like lazy writing from a fellow patient. There is a very small section of Help Pages at the end with some practical suggestions. Although it is fundamentally helpful, it seems simplistic, offering thoughts that can be found elsewhere.

The colours and image on the front cover are captivating but especially interesting after reading the explanation of the painting at the end of the book. I agree that it encapsulates a sense of captivity and of hope, both emotions relevant to a patient or carer. The painting on the back seemed incongruous when first examining the book. Although the author does write a rationale for it being there, I did feel that it was a bit self-indulgent to include it and the explanation was tenuous.

I was very much looking forward to reading a memoir so close to my experience and was not disappointed by the detail of treatments, routines and associated emotions. However, I was disappointed by the author's lack of reflection. He identified many aspects of cancer as his companion and although he wrote about his emotions, I wanted to know more about how that impacted on his philosophy of life and his constructs of life and death. At times, he is over sentimental about the good times, as well as reiterating too many times about how much his family mean to him (totally understandable, but not for so much repetition in a book). I was engaged by his story by the end of the book, but found it hard to warm to him at the beginning. He gives a lot of poor reviews of nurses and doctors and it is quite bleak reading.

Hearing about other people's stories is always time well spent, as it offers a rich opportunity to learn. This book is interesting, but I have not taken away key phrases and I don't feel my thinking has changed. I recommend it specifically to someone recently diagnosed who has not read much around the subject or to someone who is struggling emotionally and may benefit from hearing how it felt for someone else.

**Living with metastasised colon cancer (56-65) (December 2017)**

David Brown has written an account of his experience of cancer, from just before diagnosis, along a rocky road of treatment, to a time when surgery has removed all his remaining tumours. Essentially, to use his words, this is a “story of a man coming to terms with his own mortality”. He is initially diagnosed with colon cancer but after treatment, a scan shows that cancer has spread to two lobes of his liver. Further surgery saves his life. He has chemotherapy, and describes his experience of this too. He does not attempt to offer advice or explanations. The “help” section mainly focuses on the need to write a list of questions for doctors, to take notes, and be prepared for medical professionals who are unsympathetic.

It is easy to understand and the content travels chronologically. It is a standard paperback, with a reproduction of two of the author's paintings on the front and back. This is pleasing to the eye. The content is printed on good quality paper in an easy to read font. David writes well. He has a warm, engaging style, and does not flinch from describing what he considers to be his shortcomings. This will warm the reader to his writing. I like the fact that he acknowledges his faults; for example, he becomes angry during his treatment, with his wife bearing the brunt of this, and he has the humility to admit to this and to appreciate her patience and care.

The author pays great tribute to his wife and three daughters. His wife is his constant support, organising his meals, food supplements, writing notes during medical consultations and being his rock. His daughters are described as loving, supportive and high achievers. In contrast, with a very few exceptions, the author expresses much negativity about the NHS. He describes incompetence, cover-ups for mistakes, scowling, faulty machinery, poor attitudes, failure to keep wards clean, and neglect of his needs. I cannot believe that this can be in any way inspiring or helpful to others who are embarking on a treatment regime and they would almost certainly create consternation. For that reason, I would not recommend this book.

**Friend, former health professional (56-65) (September 2017)**

# 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.

**Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.**

**It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.**

**We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

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