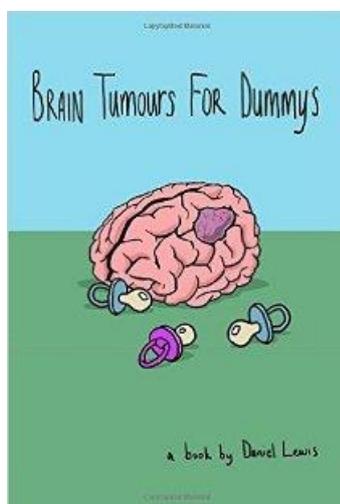


**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**

BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Brain tumours for dummies (2015)

Lewis D.
CreateSpace Independent Publishing
Platform, 2015.
248pp.
ISBN 9781514707463.

Average star rating 3.6 (out of 5)

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Because of the humour in this book as well as the deep truths, it will suit all aspects of the cancer journey and seems a very relatable read. The author describes his experiences in the order they happened and explains things to the reader, so it is very easy to understand. I noticed one error: when radiotherapy treatment was mentioned, the term 'Radiologists' is used rather than 'Therapeutic Radiographers' or 'Radiotherapists'.

The cover illustration is brilliant, and you automatically know what happens. The photos inside are a lovely touch. The author's tone is witty and clever.

A brilliant mix of information and humour! I imagine that the details of his journey will be very relatable to many patients. It is a fantastic read – humorous and emotional.

Newly qualified therapeutic radiographer (Under 25) (July 2018)



David Lewis writes about his experiences over several years. The major interesting aspects are not the feelings due to his diagnosis that he highlights, but the unfortunate fallout in his life afterwards. It is interesting how he highlights the different attitudes of people and the problems that persisted for him post treatment. He explores having to readjust to society and issues such as starting a family and trying to reclaim various aspects of his life that he had lost, such as his job and his driving license. Overall, it is quite optimistic; although David explores low points, he always shows through his literary style that dawn comes, and the situation improves.

The book is written in chronological order and never deviates from this. The topics are handled as they are encountered by the author and everything follows to a logical conclusion story wise and ends on an overall optimistic tone. As well as this, the order is fluid, never leaving unanswered topics or stories; each of the many subplots concludes in its own right. It is easy to understand and not littered with technical jargon; any technical words are well explained. The overall text of the journey as well as the shared emotions of the author are not lost on the audience as they are written

in a simple manner without overcomplicating the subject. The tone is down to earth, with occasional humour. There is no glossary. I did not notice any factual inaccuracies. Although David mentions some aspects of treatment, his book largely focuses on his experiences and the circumstances in which he found himself.

The book looks quite appealing. The paragraphs are short and punchy, arranged in small chunks to enable easy processing. The text is of a fair size. The chapters are also quite well arranged. The book's appearance suits the subject matter. The images of the scans and of several characters in the book help the reader to visualise certain scenes. As well as this, the speech at the back of the book, from which the author drew inspiration, is quite powerful.

This is an enjoyable book and a source of overall positivity. I like the simplicity of this, the honesty of the author discussing his opinion of certain situations and individuals as well as the candid tone, through which he declares his own occasional shortcomings and pitfalls. I also like how he makes a connection with the reader as an imperfect individual; the overall story is quite enjoyable and certain twists are quite emotional. It is not written by someone throwing out specialist terminology and this allows for a certain continuity that enables the tale to be fluid and dynamic.

It is quite useful, and I will probably recommend it. It deals with the internal monologues, thoughts, and experiences of a man who must rationalise his situation post treatment and strive to regain some sort of normality in his life. It doesn't cover his medical situation in depth but focuses instead on social and job aspects of his life. His judgment of some of the characters in the book sometimes appears to be conveyed with very little justification.

Close relative of cancer patients; Carer; Health care assistant looking after patients with cancer (Under 25) (November 2017)



Anyone could read this book, purely for information. It is most useful for lifestyle issues; how to live, and how not to. I don't like the many references to drinking. I know that this was a significant part of the author's life, so had to be there, but it meant that I skipped these bits.

I don't like the cover. Is that a deliberate spelling mistake in the title? I like the cream paper inside, but the font is a tad childish for me.

This isn't the best book, nor the worst, but I would not choose to read it again. Why? It just didn't resonate with me. I spent more of my time feeling sorry for the author's partner than I did for him. I suppose it's like people - some you meet and warm to instantly and have as friends, others you don't and have as acquaintances.

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

This is about a brain tumour survivor whose recovery was in difficult circumstances. It will be most useful once in remission, but I doubt that most patients will have such complications. It is an easy read. There is little jargon and searching google or asking an oncology nurse or consultant should clarify anything not understood, but it is not over technical.

The title led me to think it would be more of a compendium than a patient journey. In fact, there is little medical information and the book must be judged against its relevance as a journey in difficult circumstances. It is interesting to read, in that recovery is set against complex circumstances, for example a bad neighbour, childbirth, and absence of a supportive employer, which created financial worries. Further complications came with the arrival of triplets although this made him focus on what was important.

It is quite useful for someone in similar circumstances, i.e. diagnosed with cancer, living in an undesirable area and lacking a supportive employer. Otherwise its usefulness is down to how someone with cancer copes in difficult circumstances.

Brain tumour survivor, glioblastoma grade 4 removed in 2005, treated 2005-2006 (56-65) (December 2017)

This book is very much based around the importance / impact of family and support networks. It wouldn't really provide much advice to anyone in a caring capacity, professional or otherwise. It may be most useful for anyone who is still managing to hold down a job, relationship, recreational activities whilst trying to cope with their condition, e.g. probably someone in partial remission.

It is a very chronological account with only a couple of flashbacks that seem to fit with the story appropriately. Most of the information is personal to the author's own experiences, so I'm not aware of any errors. The language is appropriate for the intended audience. Assuming this book wasn't "ghost written", the author writes in a clear, intelligent, lucid fashion, much of it given a generous dollop of humour that evidently reflects the own author's resilient and positive approach to life (and possible early death). It might be rather refreshing to some, as this is a first attempt at writing by a "non-author" per se, and he makes that clear from the start. He does reference medical terminology, but only when necessary, and explains what it means in layman's terms! There is no glossary but at the back there is a useful list of helpline contact details for issues with mental health, addiction, relationships, and parenting.

The cover design is aesthetically pleasing, even the spine would stand out amongst a shelf or pile of books. It also made me think about the choice of title. (I initially thought that "Dummys" was a misspelling, until I realised the pun!) It also shouts at you very loudly that this is NOT a medical journal in any shape or form. The paper is of a very good quality, and the book's dimensions closer to that of a hardback, which makes it easier to hold. The font is on the small side, but I'm sure there is, or soon will be, a large print version available. The use of photographs is limited: two sides of family photos at the back, which I guess helps put the story into context (this book covers far more ground than just cancer) but hardly any of the author himself. There are a few prints of brain scans, so at least we get to see inside his head!

Given that the topic of cancer and any other potentially life-limiting illness is about as serious as it can get, this book attempts to offer an antidote to that. The tongue-in-cheek approach to his writing and his mostly “glass-half-full” philosophy on his condition makes this book a lot more approachable to the masses, or should I say, to people who feel they still must paraphrase the word cancer as “the BIG C”! I also very much like how the story doesn’t really end when the book does, because we don’t find out if the author arrives at full remission. Or indeed if he is still alive today? Despite the obvious sting of reality, it’s a book that tries to remind us that patients are LIVING with cancer, and that every single day counts, the good and the not-so-good.

A couple of chapters (specifically 17 “The smelly Rabbi” when the author is sent on an international mission as part of his day job, and 19 “Sleep, glorious sleep” when his recovery from surgery is majorly blighted by the neighbours’ unrelenting loud music and late night partying/drug dealing) could have been squeezed into an existing chapter elsewhere; I didn’t feel some of it was so relevant to the whole story, especially chapter 17, when I kept expecting him to suffer another seizure whilst on the plane; that never happened, so I thought “Why is this included in here?”.

I’m impressed by the fact that this is the “author’s” first attempt at writing and getting published. In that respect, I take my proverbial hat off to him for being so candid about his experiences. Having said that, at times it did feel like the book was spilling over into becoming a little too autobiographical and little else. Hence the seemingly average score of three stars! On a more positive note, the story is often upbeat, and I imagine that some readers, particularly those living with the cancer, will find it refreshing and uplifting. And who knows, it may inspire the odd reader to get their own account of cancer published one day.

I might recommend it; it really does depend on the type of reader e.g. age, lifestyle, and what they are looking for. If they want lots of information and advice, then avoid this book altogether. But for emotional support, it could serve its purpose quite well.

I cared for my mother for the last 18 months of her life. She died from a grade 4 glioblastoma in 2006. I have since done some volunteering at my local hospice (36-45) (April 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

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