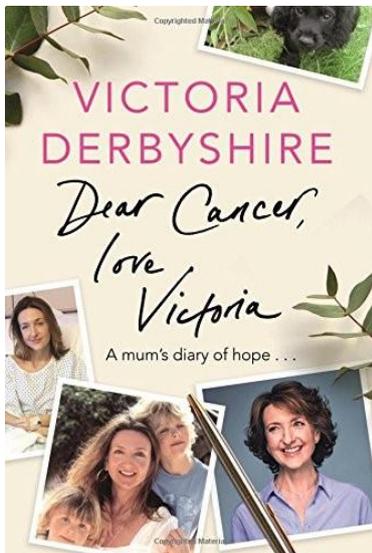


**MACMILLAN
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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**Dear cancer, love Victoria. A
mum's diary of hope (2017)**

London: Trapeze, 2017.

304pp.

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Average star rating 4.3 (out of 5)

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This is suitable for anyone going through breast cancer or their family and friends. It shows people that you can get through this. Victoria covers the minefield of diagnosis and treatment, shares her sadness and fear, and describes preparing her children so that they are not frightened. There are several nice anecdotes about her friends and family who share the “journey” with her and give the family lots of support even though she is quite independent. We all need help and it is not easy to ask.

It is an inviting book to read, with bright, cheerful photographs of Victoria and her family. The diary format makes it easy to follow; the dates give the timescale and you can dip in and out if you can't read from start to finish. The entries are well spaced and do not feel cramped. Victoria's style is direct, factual and to the point. It is easy to understand and Victoria explains terms in the text. She also touches on a subject and says she will explain later after she has been to an appointment and knows what it entails. There are a couple of printing errors but this does not detract from reading.

Victoria is clear that it is her perception of her diagnosis and treatment – other people may have a different story. I could easily identify with her thoughts, emotions and frustration. Although she can pay privately, it is the same treatment and timescale. It is not all gloom and doom, there are funny moments and Victoria's take on how to handle the issues she faced is both sad and hilarious. My only criticism is that Victoria gives the impression that she was over cancer quickly. She seems to breeze through treatment and return to regular work, which may make others feel they must get back to work. But, as I say, this is her story and how she chose to manage it as well as highlight and raise awareness of breast cancer. We all deal with it differently.

I really enjoyed this book and gave it five stars because of how it is written – it is a light read with an insight into Victoria's life and how she chose to cope with cancer. It is informative, humorous, and covers the subject well. It is her story and how it affects her family and friends and most importantly her way to aid recovery. I recommend it, but be mindful that everyone has their own story and it is not a guide to what will happen to others. It is her story, yet I found it comforting knowing that regardless of treatment, we are all connected by similar emotions and thoughts.

Living with breast cancer, lobular (46-55) (January 2018)

This book is fabulous! Victoria comes across as a very down-to-earth woman who prioritises her family, loves her job and has a challenge to face in her diagnosis. The book is honest and gives the reader an insight into Victoria's life as well the whole of her treatment. It is an interesting read for anyone, particularly helpful for those with breast cancer and those concerned about losing their hair.

It looks and feels good and is very easy to understand. The style is friendly, honest, and informative. Victoria's positive "can do" attitude is quite infectious but not overbearing and does not disparage those with a less positive outlook.

This is a great book, useful for those supporting someone with a cancer diagnosis as well as the patient themselves. I've already recommended it to people embarking on treatment, particularly those who are going to try the cold cap. I love that she makes videos at times when, surely, she'd rather not be doing that, and she cries, and finds it odd that she is crying – my goodness that is exactly what happens.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (January 2018)

Victoria Derbyshire has written a very honest account of her breast cancer diagnosis and treatment journey, with explanations of the treatments she received. It is a very open description of a very personal experience – it is not an in-depth medical book. There is a focus on her experience of hair loss through chemotherapy. She also addresses her working life and how she managed that.

It is an attractive book and includes a small selection of photos, which make it more personal. The font is large enough to make it comfortable to read when tired and the diary format makes it easy to read in bite-size amounts, helpful if the reader is having treatment. It does whip along at quite a pace, although that is not necessarily a bad thing. Victoria describes all elements of her experience in her usual journalistic manner so there are clear explanations and no glossary is required.

Victoria addresses each stage of treatment and it will be of interest to people who saw her video blogs during treatment. It is a frank read of a successful treatment path, fortunately the experience of many. She addresses the issues that worry many patients, particularly hair loss. It demonstrates well that, for many women, primary breast cancer can be a part of our life for a year or so but not become all consuming.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (January 2018)

This is a clear and useful book for a wide range of people – patients, family, friends, professionals; each will gain insights that help them understand more. It is most useful for its descriptions of what each stage of the treatment was like for one person. I like the honesty with which Victoria describes her experience.

It is easy to understand and any medical terms are clearly explained in the text. The cover design is lovely, the text is clear, and the photos are good to see.

Past cervical cancer patient (56-65) (January 2018)

This book gives you an insight into most of the treatments available and would be useful for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. If the patient has no prior knowledge of what is involved, then the detailed information will help enormously. It is also a useful read for carers, family, friends and health professionals.

I found it very easy to understand and follow and all the language is appropriate. It is in chronological order, which helps it flow easily. It is visually appealing although the size makes it more difficult to carry around. I love the feel of the cover and it felt light to carry for a large hardback. The photos are nice to look at; they break up the text and help to put faces to names.

I like this book because it was so easy for me to read. My experience of cancer has affected my health and personal life recently and I have not been able to read a book for a long time because I couldn't concentrate. I thought this would be easier to read as it is in diary form, and, having worked in the same industry, I had a personal interest in it. It is simply written in short sections and you can put it down and pick it up and easily. It is a moving, heartfelt, honest account of Victoria's story and a powerful insight into her emotional journey. Her moods, thoughts, feelings and humour all come across. I enjoyed the funny bits and I finished it!

I enjoyed this book immensely despite the fact it is about cancer. I found it hugely inspiring. It gives an honest, yet simple, account of Victoria's journey. Her warmth and friendliness shine through. What I really love about it is the way she wanted to find out about and make a note of all the individuals she met and who treated her in the NHS on her journey. It gave me an insight into diagnosis, treatment and side-effects, the different people involved in your treatment, right through to the end of treatment and recovery, which has made it appear less daunting if I ever have to go through the same process. I have already recommended it to my mum, and to my sister-in-law and aunty, both of whom have been treated for breast cancer.

Melanoma patient (46-55) (January 2018)

This book will be of interest to many people on many levels. It's most relevant to the newly diagnosed as it guides you through what to expect when you're facing a mastectomy, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy. Victoria had stage 2 breast cancer and her book is best suited to people with this stage of cancer. However, those living with a more advanced stage of breast cancer may also benefit from reading it, as will relatives, friends, and healthcare professionals; it provides a useful insight into the emotional and physical ramifications of diagnosis and treatment.

The book is organized chronologically and is easy to follow. It feels like you're sitting down reading Victoria's diary. I found it easy to understand. Victoria explains various aspects of her diagnosis and treatment in a way that's appropriate for a wide audience. She uses some medical terminology but explains it well in the text.

It is a good quality book with an attractive cover and a clear and readable typeface. There are two sections of photos, which add depth to the events described. I love that Victoria includes photos of some of the staff who treated her. She comes across as very open, honest and down to earth, and I warmed to her from the start.

I like everything about this book. It's an honest, informative account of the ups and downs of living with breast cancer and will be very helpful to anyone going through, or supporting someone in, a similar situation. It flows nicely and provides real insight into the impact of breast cancer on individuals and their families. Victoria's warmth and determination, and the closeness of her family, really shone through.

Relative of someone with breast and lung cancer (26-35) (December 2017)

I couldn't put this book down and read it in one go! This surprised me as I am not usually a fan of books by media personalities, for whatever purpose. However, I was not familiar with the work of Victoria as a journalist or presenter, other than reading some of her tweets during her treatment. This meant I had few preconceived ideas about her, which was a good thing. It is a very accessible account of having a cancer diagnosis and demonstrates how having cancer can be "manageable" and "do-able". It will be particularly useful for anyone in the medical profession to truly understand the physical, emotional and psychological impact of diagnosis on a patient.

It is very easy to read. There is little, if any, technical jargon and a glossary is not necessary. It is an appealing book, warmly written and is ultimately a heart-warming read. I particularly like how photographs are used to illustrate certain points, e.g. the use of the "cold cap", the extent of hair loss. I found it particularly touching how Victoria includes photographs of her surgeon and various nursing staff.

Overall, this book will give hope, insight and support to anyone facing diagnosis. Victoria gives an honest and straightforward picture of what it is like to have to deal with diagnosis and treatment, starting with the shock of diagnosis, then the agonising wait for test results and formulation of a treatment plan. Then there is the wait for treatment to begin, followed by the side-effects to deal with. Victoria deals at length with whether she will be able to carry on working during treatment and then that feeling of being in limbo when reaching the end of active treatment. Throughout, she is determined to keep her identity as a journalist and presenter rather than be seen primarily as a cancer patient. This was evident as she faced the "horror" of losing her hair during chemotherapy. Hair loss often seems to be a cruel badge for a cancer patient and, as she admitted, her hair was so much a part of her identity. She was perhaps more fortunate than many in having a close and loving support network of family, friends and colleagues to help her along. It is so nice to see how she took the time and effort to acknowledge the many people she met along the way, from doctors and surgeons to nurses and health care professionals; she humanises her story by naming and giving geographical context to these people as well as including photographs of them. This is a very well written book by an inspiring writer.

Breast cancer patient (66-75) (November 2017)

I read this book as I was going through chemotherapy and wish I could have read it earlier – it would have really helped me to know what to expect in a positive way. It is suitable for anyone who is going through, or knows anyone with, cancer. People who enjoy Victoria's programme will also enjoy it.

It is easy to read. There is no glossary but she explains technical language in the text and the helpful links page at the end is a nice touch. It is written as a diary so is easy to pick up and put down; sometimes the entries are quite short, not long chapters that are sometimes difficult to read and take a break from. Numerous photographs relate to the text and different stages of her journey and the reader can truly relate to what she is experiencing. It's good to see how well she looked through her treatment.

I recommend anyone going through cancer treatment, or their families, to read this book. Victoria tells her story from diagnosis to completing radiotherapy in an honest, open way. It is emotional to read at times; she had me in tears a few times because it brought back memories of my diagnosis and treatment. She is very positive however, and so inspiring. You feel so proud of what she has achieved and how she's handled it all. It's also nice to hear about her family and how they were affected too.

Breast cancer patient, almost finished treatment (36-45) (November 2017)

It is a joy to read the work of an articulate speaker and writer. Victoria's book is useful for anyone for just about every aspect of cancer. It is all very clear and easy to read. Some people may find the title a bit in your face, but if that was her choice... I didn't notice any inaccuracies but I was surprised that she chose to drive herself to and from radiotherapy as this made her very tired; I don't think it is recommended. I travelled further and mostly by public transport, which worked for me, was reasonably relaxing and provided some variety.

I really enjoyed this book, perhaps an odd comment given its title! I like Victoria's diary style, her directness and honesty, her excellent and articulate English, and her willingness to share the intimate ups and downs of her emotional and physical cancer experiences. As someone in the public eye, she has clearly done a great deal to raise awareness by her candid blogs, speaking openly on her TV programmes and publishing this book. Her use of social media shows it at its best – the way in which she was encouraged and supported via Facebook, Twitter, emails from friends, acquaintances and total strangers, and her gratitude for this. In her turn, she has supported and encouraged many others, responding to everything sent to her. She uses all her journalistic skills to dispel some of the stigma and fears about cancer and she doesn't use the warrior vocabulary, which is great. Sharing her family's responses, especially those of her two boys, gave her story a real warmth.

As a result of reading this book, I've watched the YouTube videos that Victoria made through her treatment in 2015/2016 – direct, honest and inspiring. We will promote this book, blogs, and videos in our support group and via Facebook and Twitter.

Living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (66-75) (November 2017)

This lovely book provides hope as well as information on breast cancer treatment and the steps that treatment brings. The diary format is extremely useful and makes it very easy to read. The inclusion of photos is helpful and a lovely personal touch.

I really like the format. When I was having treatment, I found it very difficult to focus on anything lengthy. I would struggle sometimes to get through a chapter, reading the same thing repeatedly. The entries make it easy to pick up and read a short entry through to its conclusion, providing hope and some control over the situation.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (November 2017)

This is mainly an insight into the emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis. Victoria shares her diary entries from when she found a lump, through tests, diagnosis, mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, to adjusting to life through and after diagnosis. She discusses the emotional highs and lows and touches on the practical and physical effects of her treatment stages and recovery.

The information seems to be accurate and is easy to understand. As the book contains diary entries, it is broken down into easy to read chunks. There is a minimum amount of technical or medical vocabulary and where it is used, Victoria is clear and concise. It is a good quality hardback with good quality paper and print. The photographs of Victoria and her family remind readers that she is not just a cancer patient but, like everyone with cancer, has a family, friends, and career.

I found the style of this book very easy to read and relate to. So many thoughts that Victoria shares hit a nerve. It often made me cry but it was also reassuring to know that I was not the only one to feel so vulnerable or scared after diagnosis. The fact that Victoria is very honest and openly shares her feelings, however irrational or random they seem, helped me to relate to her situation. She may have a high-profile job but, as soon as you begin reading, you see her as someone to relate to.

I recommend it because it deals with some of the practical issues of carrying on with family life through treatment, as well as the emotional side. It demonstrates how good days and bad days can come at any time without reason. Victoria discusses her fears, rational and irrational, but also the positive aspects of her cancer, such as support from friends and family. Being diagnosed with cancer usually comes as a complete shock warning and Victoria talks very well about how it changes all aspects of your life. How she worries about the effect this has on her partner and young sons really hit a nerve; the whole book is very insightful and sensitively written.

To hear how cancer affects the day-to-day life of Victoria and her family in such an honest way makes this a valuable read for those in a similar situation. It will help people to feel less isolated and to realise that their feelings are usual; Victoria's diaries show that by taking things day by day, treatment can be tackled and there is life during and after treatment. Whether it's returning to work, choosing a wig, or dealing with questions from your children, Victoria writes honestly, openly and articulately about many aspects of living through cancer and its treatment.

Living with cancer (NET) (46-55) (November 2017)

This book could appeal to anyone as a human-interest story. I read it after diagnosis and surgery. Had I read it before, I would have been more informed about each step of the journey, but am not sure I would have been emotionally ready to do this. It will be particularly useful for cancer professionals who have not had cancer, as it explains exactly how someone going through diagnosis and treatment feels and will help them appreciate the patient's perspective. It would also help partners and friends in as far as what to expect physically and mentally and how they can best help their loved one – what to say, not to say, do, or not do.

It starts on the morning that Victoria first finds a change in her breast and ends after her treatment and is written as a diary, so in a logical order. Based on my experience, I found it a completely accurate account. It is very easy to understand; whenever Victoria introduces a medical or technical term, she explains what it means in basic language so you can follow the story without having to refer to a glossary.

It is a standard hardback of good quality. There are some twenty pictures of Victoria and her family, from her childhood to post diagnosis. These help the reader engage in her life and journey and relate to her as a woman. The tone is spot on and you feel like her friend reading the diary entries. She comes across as a likeable, intelligent, thoughtful woman and, even though a minor celebrity, quite normal. You were rooting for her throughout the book. I don't think the title needs to include "a mum's journey". I am not a mother and it could put off others who are not; they may think it's not suitable for them, which would be a shame. However, I appreciate she also wrote this for her two boys and wanted to indicate that in the title.

The book gives an extremely accurate factual description of the journey from initial diagnosis and treatment through to being cancer free. It also captures the emotional highs and lows experienced. It is an uplifting positive story; this is something you are desperately looking for when first diagnosed. I really enjoyed it and read it in one session five months after being diagnosed and having a mastectomy and immediate reconstruction. I found it very easy to relate to Victoria's journey, although I did not have chemotherapy or radiotherapy. I found it very therapeutic. I could appreciate and reflect upon what had happened to me more fully. Several times I was in tears, whereas I had not cried at all through the process itself. It felt like I was grieving for what had happened to me for the first time and I feel this has had a very positive effect on me and helped me close the door on this episode and move on with my life.

I like Victoria's honesty; her fear, pain, and despair is described without censorship, which is very much appreciated by someone going through the same process. I didn't feel alone and my emotions were validated. Many times, I felt I could have been reading my account of the process. I recommend it for those just diagnosed and those post treatment. It clearly explains what to expect at and from each step of the process and talks in layman's language – everything is all very new to you when you are first diagnosed. It offers a positive success story, which is exactly what you need to hear when you are diagnosed and it shows cancer can be treated successfully. I imagine it is most useful to breast cancer patients but would serve as an inspiring success story for any cancer patient.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (October 2017)

This is such an honest book. I could identify with some of what Victoria went through. I laughed, cried, and felt the anger as she shared her thoughts, feelings and emotions in a beautiful, open, and at times painful diary. She writes from the heart and this book will pull on your heart strings; it is a rollercoaster of emotions.

Victoria has an easy, relaxed style of writing that makes it seem as if she is talking to you. She pulls no punches, and deals with diagnosis and treatment in a pragmatic way. Cancer certainly was a huge influence in her life, but she weaves her story round work, family commitments and current events, which add an interesting dimension and help track her progress. She makes it clear that this is her story and that others may deal with things differently. It's also not sugar coated; she includes some of the emails she received from others with cancer, some reduced me to tears.

I'm sure this will be a comfort to people who are experiencing cancer themselves or supporting a loved one. Throughout, Victoria mentions by name and nationality many, many NHS staff that she met. Whilst it is science that made sure Victoria is now, and hopefully always will be, cancer free, she makes it clear that science is no use without the fantastic nurses, doctors and other professionals who devote their careers to researching, treating, caring for, and supporting those with cancer. Thank you, Victoria, for sharing such a personal journey with all of us.

Living with lymphoma (66-75) (October 2017)

This series of candid diary entries charts Victoria's experience of breast cancer diagnosis and treatment (chemotherapy and radiotherapy). It will be hugely valuable to anyone facing diagnosis and treatment, and those around them. So much of it resonated with me even though I'm living with a recurrence of a different cancer. It really is a diary of hope and so much more: positivity and navigating the emotions associated with the shock of diagnosis; awaiting a treatment plan; telling children, family, friends; facing chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy and the side effects; figuring out if it's feasible to continue working; and approaching the end of active treatment.

It is well written, with easy to understand explanations of any technical terms, procedures or medications. The inclusion of photos of Victoria during her treatment and with friends and family members adds a personal touch.

Victoria's desire to continue to work during treatment is a useful angle – her determination to preserve some normality but not knowing how treatment would make her feel from one day to the next. She relays the anxieties of hair loss and the constant worry of being rumbled wearing a wig whilst maintaining a television presence during treatment. I have found hair loss hard to deal with through chemo (even for a second time) but reading how Victoria felt about it was somehow reassuring and has inspired me to adopt a bolder attitude when wearing my wig.

It will be particularly helpful to people affected by cancer with young children. Victoria's approach was to talk openly with her children about what was happening and how it made them feel. Even if people elect to handle things differently with their children, it is a good prompt to consider how children may be affected, not only at the outset of a diagnosis but during and after active treatment.

I recommend it; it is largely an uplifting read yet doesn't gloss over the low points. Victoria is upfront in saying that the book tells of her personal cancer experience – much of the focus is on demystifying what treatment entails and feels like to go through as well as charting the emotional highs and lows of processing a cancer diagnosis and treatment milestones. She acknowledges that everyone's experience of cancer differs and emphasises there is no right or wrong way to deal with it. The inclusion of emails from well-wishers to Victoria during treatment illustrates how, by sharing her experiences via her video diaries, Victoria has been, and continues to be, a huge source of inspiration to others navigating similar experiences.

Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (October 2017)

This book would be suitable for anyone affected by cancer especially someone with breast cancer. It is so inspiring, a true and honest account of Victoria's journey through treatment. It would be encouraging for someone who has just been diagnosed with breast cancer and for someone who is about to start treatment.

It is very appealing because of who the author is. The diary format takes you through Victoria's experience step by step. It is very easy to read; Victoria explains her treatments in layman's language. I like the cover and the title. I was drawn to it because I knew Victoria from her TV programme (although I rarely watch it). Until I read her book, I didn't know that she had made a video diary of her journey that was aired on television and reported in many newspapers.

I love Victoria's honesty despite being a famous journalist. In her everyday life, she is a partner, mother, sister, daughter, friend and colleague, telling her story. After her diagnosis, she became an ordinary NHS patient, no airs or graces, no special treatment because she is a celebrity. The wonderful treatment she received is an accolade for the NHS. Her book is great encouragement for breast cancer patients. I thoroughly recommend it for anyone; in fact, I am passing it on to my friends to read.

Breast cancer 2011 (66-75) (October 2017)



This is a useful book for understanding the feelings of a cancer patient. It is very easy to understand; the author explains things at every opportunity to help people not in the medical profession. The cover is quite appealing, the paper is good quality, and the layout and choice of pictures are good.

I like the author's directness and honesty; she shares some of her darkest times with the reader and gives relatives and friends an insight into what the patient may be feeling; some patients don't want to talk directly to their friends and relatives because they don't want to upset them or make them feel bad.

I had breast cancer in 2006; relative/carer in 2009 (36-45) (February 2018)

This is most useful for the personal description and thought processes of the author. They give an insight into how the person affected by cancer, who may be close to you, is thinking and processing their diagnosis for themselves.

It is easy to understand and read; it is in the format of a journal, so you can read chunks on and off instead of having to read whole chapters and lose track.

Like most of the books I have read around the subject, I like the honesty of this book the most, the rawness and the realness.

Relative of people diagnosed with both breast and bladder cancer (26-35) (January 2018)

I was in two minds about this book as Victoria's first video blog gave the impression that her experience of surgery was a bit of a "walk in the park". However, the book comes across in a different way and I found it enjoyable to read; it is more on a day-by-day basis. It would be suitable for anyone although, obviously, it concentrates on Victoria's experience of breast cancer from diagnosis to her final treatment.

It is in diary form and therefore in chronological order. The language is easy to understand. There is a basic explanation of most of the items she discusses, but it is not in depth. I didn't notice any errors although other treatment options are not mentioned. It is an appealing book with a simple layout. The cover is pleasant and there are photos in two sections of the book, which remind you that it is about a real person with real experiences. It is not a heavy, hard-going book, it is easy to read, leave, and pick up again. Victoria also includes diary entries about her work subjects and this can be interesting, although they can feel a bit random.

Overall, it is useful and I would recommend it, but we must remember that not all diagnoses and treatment are the same – nor are any two people; this is one person's experience. For example, Victoria had immediate reconstruction, which is not always possible. This is not explained and recovery from mastectomy can be completely different from one person to the next. There is also no mention of lumpectomies or delayed reconstruction. I would have liked her to mention that, if immediate reconstruction is not suitable, there are other options. Also, Victoria was very lucky to be able to carry on working and is in a very different position to many women.

I would give this a higher rating if it is made clear that it is a personal diary and a basic explanation of other options. I would not like someone to read it and think that this will be their experience too. Again, as mentioned above, Victoria does write about other aspects, such as her work, that are not related to cancer and they do seem to be out of place. Other than that, it is a very enjoyable book.

Living with breast cancer (46-55) (January 2017)

This is an easy read that would appeal to anyone and could be read at any stage. It is written logically from diagnosis to the end of treatment. It is written very clearly and the diary format means that you can dip in and out. It is well laid out and I like that the text is broken up with photos. It will be easier to transport in paperback!

I like the fact that it is a personal journey. I was impressed at how Victoria managed to "demystify" the treatment process. Her video diaries are very honest. She reflects the view that a cancer diagnosis does not mean that there is no hope, but she also covers the extreme lows. However, it might not be an easy read for those without a support network like Victoria's.

Relative of various cancer patients (46-54) (October 2017)



Victoria provides an insight into her experience of diagnosis and what treatment entail in broad terms but her focus is on managing life around diagnosis and treatment. I like her positive approach, despite her often-fleeting acknowledgement of the gravity of her situation. She is determined to maintain normality in all areas of her life as far as possible. Strength of character is admirable, and whilst I didn't see the video diaries, I imagine that listening to them in conjunction with reading the book will make the message even more powerful. The messages at the end from well-wishers sharing their experiences add an interesting dimension.

It is a quality book and the sleeve conveys a sense of warmth and happiness within the family unit. The language is plain and medical terminology is explained in layman's terms.

I did not find it as compelling as those by others who have dealt with their cancer journeys and this is probably owing to the diary format. Victoria admits to experiencing excellent care, contributing to a relatively smooth journey (although still very difficult), unlike the experience of some others, and she does not record too many side effects or significant complications. Apart from a degree of luck, I would controversially ask, could it be that a better level of care is given to someone in the public eye? Beside her fear of the cancer returning, she seems most upset at hair loss and tiredness. For someone so publicly visible, hair loss is disturbing, but had the side effects of treatment been worse in other ways, it would have been far less important. After all, apart from the function of warmth, the crowning glory is purely cosmetic. Her book also emphasises how a support network (her substantial number of friends and family) helps balance work, play, and management of treatments.

This book is not as entertaining as another diary style book called 'Probably Nothing' where the writer manages to inject great humour into her writings. However, entertainment value is not the aim, and humour is evident here and there. The content is literally a snapshot of Victoria's life at this particularly challenging time.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (March 2018)

This book is most useful as a reassuring patient's perspective of breast cancer treatment. It is best read after diagnosis, but preferably before or during treatment as the book ends before Victoria adjusts to life after treatment. It would be most useful for an older woman with early stage breast cancer, her family and friends. Women facing a high risk of recurrence, metastatic cancer, younger women, or male patients are likely to feel alienated or depressed by the content.

It is an appealing book to read, presented as a diary in chronological order as Victoria went through treatment, but reading like an autobiography. Numerous colour photos of Victoria with her family, friends, colleagues and hospital staff are included. It is easy to understand as all technical terms are explained within the text. In my opinion, the book is appropriate for all audiences.

I like that a well-known public figure has opened up about her experience to raise awareness of breast cancer and its treatment. The book has a very reassuring tone. However, I did not like the constant name dropping and self-congratulatory elements. Too much time is spent boasting about her amazing lifestyle, career and awards and Victoria was able to afford additional private healthcare to speed up the diagnostic process, as well as additional scans; this might not be available for most readers.

I didn't find it particularly useful as I finished treatment some time ago, but it could be a useful and reassuring resource in the early days of diagnosis and treatment. I would possibly recommend it to other patients and their families. I gave it three stars because none of the content is particularly original or unique and it does not appear that any proceeds from sales of the book will be donated to cancer charities. I am not entirely comfortable recommending a book written by a wealthy celebrity that mostly serves to make her more wealthy and famous.

Breast cancer patient (36-45) (January 2017)

This is most useful for patients going through diagnosis. It is also useful for partners, carers, family and friends; as well as explaining the physical aspects of treatment, it could give them an idea of your possible feelings and how they can respect them.

It is in a logical order, starting with diagnosis and then the most common treatments (surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy). I like the fact there are small paragraphs; this makes it easy to put down if you are tired and want a break or if it is upsetting. It is easy to understand but the language around her fear of her cancer spreading isn't appropriate, especially where she is concerned that "this is it" if it has spread (p. 19).

This is Victoria's experience and it is easy to read. Many people will be able to identify with the content but it might make some feel that they should be able to work and live a normal life; this may put pressure on them or give family members too high expectations. I think it is best for readers of the same age, possibly with children.

Living with incurable brain tumour for 13 years (36-45) (November 2017)

This is a well-written book. Victoria details her illness from diagnosis to completion of treatment. Although it is about breast cancer, it would be useful for any cancer. Victoria explains well how she dealt with her diagnosis and treatment, physically and emotionally. She shows how she manages to continue to work between treatments and talks about how her partner and children cope. It will be particularly useful for anyone with children as it explains how they deal with their mother having cancer, including their fears. The photos help us picture Victoria's life and family.

There is a lot of detail about the cold cap, which seemed more of a psychological prop as it didn't seem to preserve her hair. In my opinion, the discomfort far outweighed the benefits but this fact might be useful in helping people to decide whether to use it. She also does video sessions of herself having chemotherapy and judging by the letters at the end of the book, this certainly helped other women who were having chemotherapy, helping them carry on even when they felt at their worst.

I like that it is a very honest description of how the treatment went and that it describes the good aspects of the NHS at a time when we tend to hear only the negatives. I didn't particularly like the author's descriptions of her work. I found this a bit boring and think it could have been left out.

It is easy to read and I wanted to finish it but I think I have read better books that describe the effects of chemotherapy and how to deal with them as well as the biological aspects. This is more of a personal story of how a high-profile person deals with cancer. I might recommend it, but, having read and evaluated many other books about cancer, this is not one of the best. However, if someone has followed Victoria Derbyshire on TV and relates to high-profile people, they may like to read it.

Womb cancer survivor (66-75) (November 2017)

As I write, I am half way through Victoria's book. I am writing the review now because of my feelings towards it. I have begun to feel angry whilst reading. Not at the principle behind the book, this I applaud, not for the way it is written, no, it is the fact that it is yet another book written by a well-known person about cancer.

What I find galling is that Victoria's privilege and money enabled her to experience cancer in a very different way from others. As soon as she publicised having cancer, the messages of support and offers of help came flooding in. "Great and wonderful", I hear you cry. And I agree. But what angers me is that people are diagnosed with cancer every day, every day a family is impacted by this, but not every day do people receive this outpouring of sympathy – the flowers, tweets, messages, care and compassion. Victoria did not know that this would happen and her intentions were honourable, but somehow it sends a message that is "too nice".

I do have cancer. It is with me for the rest of my life. I may or may not develop leukaemia and no one has even heard of the type I have. I am not the only one of course and there are people with cancer who cannot have it cut out or who are not cancer free having undergone treatment.

What Victoria has done is honest. Her feelings are the same as many who have gone through diagnosis and treatment. She did not know what would happen when she published her book, so what is it that troubles me? Perhaps it's that the publishers and media are so keen to publish another cancer story without a thought for those who do not have fame and fortune behind them.

I will continue to read the book and finish it, but it conveys the same feelings and thoughts that many women and their families experience. There is nothing special here, nothing to grab me and make me think that it is different from the rest. It has been published because of the face behind it rather than the experience itself.

Many of you will think that these words are harsh and unnecessary. But when reviewing a book, I like to be honest and transparent. Enjoy what you read, but remember the many who do not have such a fortunate background and for whom cancer is a much harder slog than portrayed here.

Now that I have finished the book, I think my feelings are probably in the minority. The way that Victoria went public with her cancer helped many people. Her feelings and emotions are honestly portrayed and I applaud her courage in "advertising" her time with cancer. Many of us would rather go through it more privately. So, do I still feel anger? Not really. Just frustration that it is easier in some ways for someone well known and with money. For others, less fortunate, it is not.

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



This is a diary of a personal experience and would suit someone with cancer or someone interested in the life of Victoria Derbyshire, the author. It is useful for anyone with breast cancer who does not want to ask questions, challenge diagnosis or treatment options, and who wants to follow an orthodox, conventional route.

It is easy to read and understand. The author explains medical terms and words as she goes along. I did notice factual inaccuracies. On page 20, the author states that "Grade 2 means the cells are growing at a moderate pace; Grade 1 is slow-growing; Grade 3 is faster growing." This is incorrect. Firstly, breast cancer is usually "staged" not graded. "Stage 1 usually means that a cancer is relatively small and contained within the organ it started in. Stage 2 usually means that the tumour is larger than in stage 1, but the cancer has not started to spread into the surrounding tissues. Sometimes stage 2 means that cancer cells have spread into lymph nodes close to the tumour. This depends on the particular type of cancer. Stage 3 usually means the cancer is larger. It may have started to spread into surrounding tissues and there are cancer cells in the lymph nodes in the area. Stage 4 means the cancer has spread from where it started to another body organ. This is also called secondary or metastatic cancer. Sometimes doctors use the letters A, B or C to further divide the number categories. For example, stage 3B cervical cancer." (Source: <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/what-is-cancer/stages-of-cancer>)

Secondly, it might have taken a cancer 20 years to grow into either a stage 1 or a stage 4 cancer, or it might have taken as little as 6 months. There are tests that determine rate of cell growth. Examples of these tests are S-phase fraction testing and Ki-67. We don't know if the author had these tests.

On page 95, the author states that chemotherapy is "an option not offered to some cancer patients because their illness has progressed too far." Really? If so, where is the evidence to support this claim. On page 162, she states "Before leaving I inject into my stomach the solution that boosts my immune system..." Disappointingly, she doesn't say what this solution is, but she does state the names of all her other prescribed medication. Is this because she is using Iscador (mistletoe therapy), a medication recently removed from funding by the NHS, but prescribed in Europe to around 80% of cancer patients?

I like the inclusion of the author's personal photos and the links to her breast cancer videos which can be found on page 290. I like her frankness about the chemotherapy drugs, her descriptions about the cold cap, side effects of Tamoxifen, and her openness about her fears. I did not know, for example, that radiation can make a breast implant harden (p. 225). I didn't like that she did not list the risks of taking Tamoxifen, including uterine cancer and I remain in two minds about the inclusion of messages she received from members of the public (she did obtain their consent). The cynic in me says the publisher needed more pages. I do note that the diary is well spaced out.

The author is a journalist and TV reporter, and a person I regularly watch and admire on her show on BBC2. What I dislike about the book is that, as a journalist with presumably an enquiring mind, she did not challenge or research her condition or the treatment options given to her by the medical profession. She simply went along with everything she was told in an unchallenging manner. For example, she states that chemotherapy reduces the chances of the cancer recurring (p. 95), and that "With chemotherapy, my chances of living a longer life are immeasurably boosted" (p. 121). Really? There is plenty of research that states that chemotherapy destroys the immune system, leaving the body incapable of dealing with any future, or rogue, cancer cells and can cause cancer to metastasise. In fairness to the author, she does state (p. 126) that "The chemo will kill them [the cancer cells] as well as killing all the good cells" and then flippantly says "ha – but that's the way it goes."

On page 106, the author states that she is recommended "six sessions of chemotherapy to eliminate any cancer cells that may or may not be elsewhere" in her body. Surely, anyone, particularly a journalist, would not embark on chemotherapy with its life-long side effects as a precautionary measure, and in the absence of further tests, investigation and knowledge as to whether there are cancer cells elsewhere in her body. On page 107, the author recounts percentages she was given. She states that "Without any further treatment, the chances of the cancer coming back are twenty to thirty per cent. Chemotherapy reduces it by another third. Radiotherapy by another five per cent, and the more ferocious chemo regime by another three to four per cent.". There are prognostic tests that can predict breast cancer recurrence such as Oncotype Dx in patients with ER-positive/HER2-negative breast cancer (the same cancer as the author), particularly during a five to 10-year timeframe. Tests like Oncotype Dx Recurrence Score, PAM50-based Prosigna Risk

of Recurrence Score (ROR), Breast Cancer Index (BCI), and EndoPredict (EPclin) predict the risk for cancer recurrence by measuring the expression of several genes linked to breast cancer. Disappointingly, the author fails to mention any of this in her book (possibly because she's not done her research).

On page 205, after a mastectomy and chemotherapy, the author does ask her consultant, "if there is some blood test or some other specific method they can deploy to tell me definitively that I'm cancer-free." She is told there isn't but goes onto to write "What I want – a diagnostic test I can take every six months, to tell me if cancer is present in my body-does not exist at the moment." Sadly, the author accepts what is said unchallengingly and in the absence of her own research. There are blood tests that help to diagnosis cancer. Circulating Tumor Cell (CTC) tests are a simple blood test that will test your blood for pieces of DNA thrown off by the current tumours and these will show exactly what is happening to the cancer as a result of the drugs you have taken. These tests help oncologists in assessing the prognosis of patients with breast, colorectal, or prostate cancer by measuring circulating tumour DNA. There are also tests for tumour markers like CA125 for ovarian cancer, calcitonin for medullary thyroid cancer, alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) for liver cancer, and human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) for germ cell tumours, such as testicular and ovarian cancer, and full blood count and blood protein testing.

Furthermore, she doesn't provide a sufficiently balanced view on percentages. Percentages are meaningless in the absence of any tests undertaken on the patient's cancer. Anyone could be either side of these percentages. By way of explanation, a patient could be given a 1 in 10 chance of dying. The patient might be that one or might be in the group of nine, or believe they are going to die and die anyway. There is no way of knowing (in the absence of tests) and it all depends on a person positive mental attitude and attitude towards risk.

The book might be quite useful in providing emotional support to someone following the same path as the author. I gave it a low star rating because I look to be educated and informed by cancer reading material. I was disappointed, given the author's profession as a journalist and reporter, that she failed to do her own independent research, and left her enquiring mind at the door of the hospital. I would have liked her to have been more demanding of answers to questions that she had and which we all want to know. Her videos might be a more useful resource, albeit I have only seen edited versions via the BBC news.

Living with untreated DCIS breast cancer diagnosed October 2012 (56-65) (May 2018)

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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