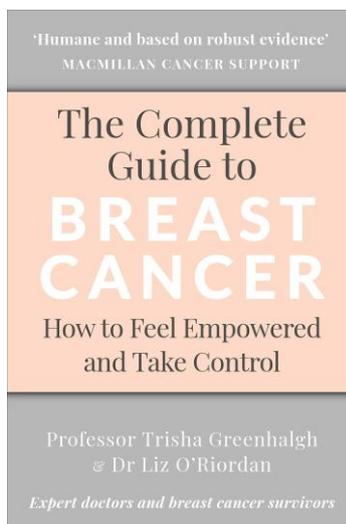


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



The complete guide to breast cancer: how to feel empowered and take control (2018)

Greenhalgh T, O'Riordan L.
London: Vermilion, 2018.
304pp.
ISBN 9781785041877.
£14.99.

Average star rating 4.8 (out of 5)

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This is by far the best book about breast cancer that I have read. It identifies everything you need to know about your treatment. It covers all types and stages of breast cancer, all orthodox medical treatments and how they work, and the many emotional aspects of dealing with the changes to one's body and life and how to prepare yourself for these changes. It also covers some of the alternative treatments and how they can be misleading. It is very easy to understand, and all medical terminology is explained in detail. It is a lovely looking book.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who has been recently diagnosed with breast cancer. It covers every aspect of breast cancer for patients and carers.

Breast cancer survivor (oestrogen-positive HER2 negative) (36-45) (May 2019)

This is a wonderful book for anyone affected by breast cancer or anyone caring for someone with breast cancer. It offers useful information from diagnosis through recovery. There are helpful sections on sharing the news, the medical aspects of treatment, and relationships during and after treatment. I found it easy to understand. The pictures and diagrams are clear and very helpful.

The authors are doctors and have experienced breast cancer first hand. I like their ability to focus on the medical and personal aspects of treatment. I would have found this book very reassuring during treatment and wish I had had a copy then. It offers advice as well as compassion and reassurance.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (April 2019)

I wish I had read this book when I was first diagnosed as it is a comprehensive and up-to-date, yet friendly and reassuring, guide to the entire process. It is useful for all aspects of living with breast cancer: surgical and medical issues and treatment options – including what to expect; the impact of those options and their effects on relationships, sex life, and work; your emotions, including coping with secondary cancer or health after treatment ends; and the mental and emotional aspects for which no one prepares you. It will also be useful for those supporting the person with cancer – there is plenty of information to help them discuss treatment options and understand what is happening to their family member or friend.

It is written with understanding by two people who have lived through the experience. The language is easy to understand. There is no glossary, but terms are explained as they occur and there is an extremely useful resources section. The language and supporting diagrams are easy to interpret even with post-treatment chemo brain – a pleasant change from many texts full of medical terms. This is important as diagnosis is a confusing time; most articles online are scientific and use academic language that is difficult for the lay person to interpret accurately. The text is supported with clear diagrams and first-hand experiences in highlighted boxes.

The cover is a little bland, but I like the subtitle. The typeface and font are easy to read. I like the boxes that highlight personal experiences and the illustrative diagrams are clear and useful. The tone is positive but realistic and has a personal touch as both authors have experienced the journey themselves.

I like the fact that it is written by two doctors who have had personal experience of breast cancer; this really shines through in the way emotional and well-being issues are mentioned frequently, not just purely medical treatment information. I like the way the headings are phrased as questions you might ask yourself and how easy it is to dip into to find information for your stage of treatment to help inform decisions and understand the process. The resources section at the end is also extremely useful.

I recommend it without a doubt. It is the most comprehensive book I have seen on the subject without being too scary and with plenty of positive and supportive information to help guide you through your journey. This book has it all, from information to guide treatment decisions and help you ask the right questions at appointments to emotional support and tips on all the affected areas of your life and relationships. I wish I had read it at the start of my cancer journey – it's a must read for anyone who has just been diagnosed!

I like the personal touches; both authors have experienced breast cancer and realise that the effects are not merely medical. I appreciate the sections on how cancer affects other areas of your life and relationships. The only improvement I would suggest is more information on triple-negative breast cancer as this is scant.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (March 2019)

This book is pitched well – from the patient/relative learning about breast cancer for the first time to healthcare professionals like me who will find useful ways to explain things to their patients. It is useful for all aspects but more so for a newly diagnosed patient and their relative.

The layout is very appealing and easy to navigate. Each chapter stands alone, allowing the reader to choose those relevant to them at the time and come to others later. It is very easy to understand, with appropriate language and no jargon. I particularly like the “questions to ask your doctor”. These are useful questions for patients to ask me and I will take them on board when explaining to patients. My only comment is that the section on secondary breast cancer could be more in depth.

Relative of breast cancer patient and oncology doctor (26-35) (March 2019)

This book is aimed primarily at someone with primary breast cancer, who needs to make informed decisions that are right for them. It is a map to navigate the whole journey from diagnosis, through treatment (surgery, reconstruction, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, Herceptin, hormone treatment), coping with changes (relationships, sex, infertility, pregnancy), recovery (physical and emotional), and recurrence and concerns about secondary cancer, to moving forward. The authors are open to the benefits of complementary therapies, such as mindfulness, yoga, diet and exercise, but explain how to detect quack cures and extreme diets. It is also useful for partners, family and friends; it may help them understand what their loved one is going through and the science of breast cancer and its treatment. It is useful for parents dealing with the impact of cancer on children, including adult children, and elderly grandparents, and offers guidance to family and friends who want to know how they can support the person with cancer. It never stereotypes and includes men with breast cancer, LGBT people, and all ages, from the concerns of young women (fertility, menopause), to those of older people. In a nutshell, it gives people back some control over their lives, so they can tell cancer where to go and find their 'new normal'. Health professionals will gain insight into the patient experience, especially as the authors are former patients and health professionals.

Because the authors have experienced cancer and are health professionals, they really understand what information the reader needs first. For example, after dealing with the practical and emotional aspects of diagnosis, they paint a big picture of all treatments before describing them in detail. Fears about prognosis and survival loom large when you're diagnosed, and they tackle this early on but in a way that is always practical and positive, never preachy, showing you things you can do to help yourself. You can read it from start to finish or skip chapters that aren't relevant, or that you don't feel emotionally up to reading, without losing the thread. It is written in a friendly style and in plain, simple English, so it is easy to understand. Technical terms are introduced in ordinary language and then given their technical phrase, e.g. 'after surgery (adjuvant chemotherapy)', so it doesn't overwhelm you with medical words. There is a comprehensive index. As the intended audience is the ordinary lay reader, the language is appropriate and helps to de-mystify cancer; you can understand what is happening to your body and how treatments work; this increases your confidence.

The reader is addressed directly as 'you', making you feel like a whole person, not a passive patient. Facts and theories are supplemented with Liz and Trish's practical experience, so it is not only authoritative but personal; this helps you to know you're not alone. It is often uplifting and funny. The Kindle version is easy to search and has links to information and organisations. The simple black-and-white diagrams focus on what you need to know and spare you the full impact of photos, which can be shocking if you're not prepared. I appreciated that. My Macmillan nurse showed me photos of surgery/reconstruction only when I was ready, and it helped me to look at them not alone but with her there to provide support/tissues/tea/jokes!

I didn't spot any errors, but the book doesn't reflect practice everywhere. The authors state (Chapter 13), 'Before you have either AI or ovarian suppression you will have a bone density DEXA scan to measure your bone strength'. I didn't. My nurse said it depends on your age, and how long you will take AIs. In Chapter 7, re One Step Nucleic Acid Amplification (OSNA) they write, 'If the node is positive your surgeon can remove the rest of your armpit lymph nodes while you are still asleep instead of

having another operation a few weeks later'. Sometimes even if they are positive they decide not to remove the rest of your lymph nodes but offer you radiotherapy instead later. This is explained later in Chapter 12 and axillary node clearance is explained a little later in Chapter 7. Perhaps the next edition could amalgamate this information in one place? Lymph node issues are a big concern to people.

When you're diagnosed you're bombarded with helpful information, but this brings it together. Because the authors have had breast cancer, you realise they understand what you're going through and trust them. They never moralise or make you feel bad. For example, they discuss the link between cancer and lack of exercise/obesity, but in a positive way, in the context of what you can do during recovery; they point out that they were fit but still got cancer. It helped me understand it's not my fault and empowered me by explaining that there are things I can do to make myself feel better. The way it presents not just theory, but also authentic experience helped me weigh up what is best for me. It reminds you, 'it's your body and your decision to make', so you feel comfortable with your decisions. It stops you worrying why you've been recommended one treatment over another by explaining the science. It understands how cancer affects so many aspects of your life. It helped me think of ways to share my news with family and cope with their reactions. It is like sitting with a calm, knowledgeable friend or my Macmillan nurse, who understood me and made me feel better instead of lecturing me or going all medical drama on me!

I would like more information in the section 'Cancer profiling tests', such as oncoprint, the trials about this, especially now this test is being offered to people with positive lymph nodes and will affect many more people. More information about lymph nodes, lymphovascular invasion and how chemotherapy is not always necessary in these cases would also be helpful, as would more information about taking part in trials, particularly if they might delay your treatment or affect other conditions but you feel you want to help. More explanation of the Nottingham Prognostic Index would be helpful; this is often on your report and doesn't take into account your oncoprint score. The authors briefly mention NPI scores and explain they mean it is excellent, intermediate or poor, which is scary if you stumble across it by accident on your report. These scores are not a crystal ball and are useful only as a tool to help you decide if the benefit of a treatment is worth the side effects.

This book needed to be written and I am grateful to the authors for taking the time to use and share their personal experience and professional knowledge and write it. It is a comprehensive, maybe unique, sensitively written book that provides up-to-date information, emotional support, personal stories, and guidance about living with and managing breast cancer, which would also be of general interest to friends and family. An antidote to any temptation to 'Dr Google' your condition, which can raise your anxieties, this book helps you confront your fears and learn practical measures to tackle them and teaches you to be kind to yourself. It reassures you about common post-treatment reactions that will get better with time or exercise and flags up symptoms that indicate you might need to seek medical or psychological help.

The authors conclude by saying, "We hope that we've empowered you to understand what is happening to you and given you the strength to cope" – I can emphatically say, yes, you have. This frank but sensitively written book brings together all the facts in one place and covers everything, not just the latest science and treatments, but

the personal, psychological and existential aspects too. Following Liz and Trish's personal setbacks and progress helps you begin to accept your experience and determine what is important to you as an individual, so you can make decisions. Instead of ruminating and worrying about things, read this book for reassurance that we all have our setbacks and dark days, even medics, but those fears can be countered with facts and practical things you can do to look after yourself. For me, it helped sketch in a map when the way ahead seemed a blank and kitted me up with the necessary medical terminology, so I could understand better what was happening and why. As well as getting me up to speed on all the latest available cancer treatments and pointing me to further resources, it is also full of simple practical tips and insights; it even managed to make me laugh at times and value the ways this experience has made me wiser. Finally, by manageable mini-steps, it gently encouraged me to begin to find my 'new normal' and to look after myself better.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (March 2019)

The complete guide to breast cancer provides all the information you need to support you through the breast cancer journey whether as a patient, carer or relative. Health professionals who are working in the field but who have not experienced the journey themselves will find it useful to develop awareness and understanding from a patient's perspective.

It is an ideal support manual taking you through all aspects of diagnosis through to treatment. The authors are health professionals and breast cancer patients who understand the journey from start to finish and all the complexities of emotions surrounding diagnosis and treatment.

It is written in very clear and easy to understand terms. References to medical terminology are broken down into easy to understand language and this enables you to develop a further understanding of what things mean, how it may impact on you, and suggestions of coping mechanisms and strategies.

The chapters are clearly titled so that you can go straight to the information you need. Each chapter has the balance of medical terminology and patient guidance required to support you through the journey. The order and the tone are perfectly pitched and will help anyone to understand where they are and what happens next. You are also given suggested questions for when you meet your consultant – these are useful especially when you can be struggling to understand and cope.

This is a book that would support anyone diagnosed with breast cancer through their journey; it is easy to read, breaks subject areas into manageable sections and covers every topic with information that is relevant and in easy to understand terminology. It should be given to all breast cancer patients to support them through their diagnosis, surgery and beyond. It provides you with everything you need to know. I would buy a copy for any family member or friend who received a breast cancer diagnosis to help support them through their journey.

Breast cancer patient (46-55) (March 2019)

This informative and easy-to-read book is very useful for someone just diagnosed, carers, partners, family or friends. It might also be useful for health professionals as the authors are doctors who have had breast cancer.

It is most useful for understanding the process and options and how you may feel right from the start, from your first visit to the doctor. It is factual, easy to read and understand and very accessible and because it gives you knowledge and insight, it makes you feel more in control. It explains things more than the consultants or doctors you will see! It also suggests questions to ask your health professionals at each stage, again putting you more in control. It is not limited to women or younger people as it has sections on breast cancer in men and older people.

It is a high-quality and appealing book in terms of size, typeface, layout, with easy-to-read text and simple but effective diagrams. The section explaining types and grades of cancer is very useful as are the diagrams of operations and reconstructions; I had not seen these before. I like the tone – human, approachable, honest, empathetic, knowledgeable and professional. The authors explain medical facts clearly but also interject their experiences at each stage; these have been different and underline the fact that the experience is not the same for everyone, and that everybody (literally) is unique. Although they cover some difficult topics – emotional and physical scarring, secondary cancer, death – they write in an understanding way, offering tips and suggestions, often from experience (and if they don't know, they say so!).

I like the breadth and depth of subjects covered – it really is the complete guide. There are many references, to evidential papers and further reading as well as to sources of support. It is very much based on knowledge and fact, supported by personal insight and experience (not just the professional view but someone who has been through it). It is comprehensive in scope and offers lots of useful information for someone from first stage diagnosis to recovery and beyond.

Simply put: excellent – the best and most helpful book on breast cancer I have read. I have already recommended it to my oncologist in the hope that he will recommend it to his patients! I only wish that it had been around when I was diagnosed ten years ago; it would have been so useful for me and my husband to understand more fully what I had, what to expect at each stage of treatment, how to cope with each stage and questions to ask of our health professionals and others.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (March 2019)

When you are afraid that something 'different' may be happening in your body, this book is invaluable. It's almost a dictionary of symptoms and what may be going on. It's exactly what the title indicates. It is very easy to follow, and terms are explained. I like the size; it's easy to hold but not too heavy (thinking of painful hands). I like, if that's the right word, that the authors are writing from experience and are survivors first and doctors second! As a breast cancer survivor, I have lost count of how many times I've referred to this book for reassurance. I've had some scary issues and I understand the things being said; it will always be my go-to support.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (February 2019)

I really wish I'd had a book like this when I was diagnosed three years ago. At the time, I felt very vulnerable and alone; I didn't know anyone else my age who had cancer and automatically assumed the worst. My oncologist didn't give me much information and I found myself relying on Google, which just increased my fears. It was only when I found a few online support groups that I started to realise I didn't have a death sentence. If I'd had a book like this, written by people who have been through exactly what I was going through, it would have helped enormously.

Both authors are doctors and breast cancer survivors and understand what women (and men) with breast cancer will want to know. It is most useful for explaining what to expect during treatment and afterwards, and how to cope emotionally and physically; it will make people feel less alone. It covers pretty much everything you need to know, even things that seem too trivial to ask busy medical staff, such as what to wear to chemotherapy. As well as sections covering each aspect of treatment, there are sections on relationships, breast cancer in men, and staying healthy. There is also a comprehensive list of websites for additional support.

The cover is pretty – it doesn't look like a cancer book – and the book is well set out in short sections. It is very easy to understand. There is no glossary, but terms are explained in the text in simple language, without patronising the reader. Bullet lists, information boxes, personal stories and illustrations are used throughout and the subheadings mean that you don't have to read it from cover to cover to find what you need. When I received my copy, I went straight to the chapter on surgery as this was most pertinent to me then. The subheadings allowed me to find the information I needed quickly and read just that section. Had I been at the start of treatment, I might have gone straight to the section on understanding the pathology report.

I like the authors' writing style. Because they have had breast cancer, they have an understanding and compassion that an author who hasn't had cancer may struggle with. I like how they cover every aspect of cancer from diagnosis through to how the reader might feel after treatment is over. As well as medical aspects, the book covers practicalities such as telling people, work issues, and staying healthy after treatment. It also covers issues that medical professionals may consider to be trivial, such as hair loss. I also like that it debunks some of the myths around miracle diets. For those feeling frightened and vulnerable at the beginning of treatment, this is very important. In fact, most of the information will be very helpful and reassuring to people just starting treatment. I also like that the authors deal sensitively with secondary breast cancer although they acknowledge that neither of them has been diagnosed with this.

This is an excellent book and I recommend it to others affected by breast cancer. It makes diagnosis and treatment much less frightening. It is informative, easy to understand but never patronising, exactly what you need at the start of treatment when everything feels strange. It puts readers at ease but doesn't gloss over the seriousness of cancer. As it provides so much information about treatments, it will also be a useful tool for patients when asking their oncologists or surgeons questions about treatment options; they could show the doctor the relevant pages. It will also be useful to friends and relatives supporting someone with breast cancer as it will give them an idea of what the patient is feeling mentally and physically.

Completed treatment for breast cancer (46-55) (February 2019)

This book aims to guide patients through treatment but is also useful for family or friends who want to find out more. It does what it says on the tin! It is very thorough, and I wish I had read it when I was diagnosed. It is very easy to follow and there is a handy index, should readers need to revisit a topic. There are many technical words, but these are explained in the text. It is not a coffee-table book but has a pleasant cover. The authors' experiences are highlighted in grey, making them easy to find.

There is a great quote (p. 4), "Doctors tell you what will happen to you, but it is the patients who will show you how to cope". The chapter on chemotherapy is very in-depth and a frank insight into the possible side effects of treatment. I love the tips on getting through the 'bad days'; I wish I had thought of a chemo caddy!

Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (February 2019)

The complete guide to breast cancer is just that: a comprehensive guide to breast cancer, from diagnosis to moving on after active treatment, and everything in between. It is very fact based and provides details on just about every aspect of the physical and mental journey. It follows a logical order from dealing with diagnosis and sharing the news, through surgery, to additional treatment and after effects. Every patient's treatment plan varies but it is easy to find specific topics from the contents page. There is also a comprehensive list of resources for further research.

The cover and general appearance are nondescript and there are no photographs. However, it is a guide through breast cancer not a personal story, so the cover and layout generally support its purpose. It is accurate (the authors are not only breast cancer survivors but also a GP and a breast surgeon) and easy to understand; the language is pitched appropriately for anyone with breast cancer. Whilst technically informative, it is written from the patient's perspective, not that of a doctor or surgeon.

It is comprehensive but not overly detailed, with answers to the questions we all have when diagnosed and information on all the topics thrown up during treatment. You can pick it up and put it down and it saves you resorting to the dreaded 'google search'. It is not as engaging or warm as some of the more personal books I have read, so I did not relate to the authors in the same way, but the aim of providing useful, fact-based information makes it a hugely beneficial resource.

I first became aware of Dr Liz O'Riordan when I found her blog, [Breast surgeon with breast cancer](#), so I was keen to read her book. It was published six months after my diagnosis, when I had finished chemotherapy and the first round of surgery. It would have been great if it had been available when I was diagnosed as it comprehensively covers all aspects of breast cancer. While it was a little late to benefit me fully, I can see how beneficial it will be for someone in the early days of diagnosis, it certainly answers many practical questions and staves off the need to google information.

Breast cancer patient, completed active treatment currently going through reconstruction (36-45) (February 2019)

This easy-to-read “breastcancerpedia” covers all aspects of living with breast cancer. I recommend it for patients, family and friends and wish there had been more books with such a positive tone when I was diagnosed 18 years ago. It is most useful for the physical aspects (private and sexual life) and social aspects (including sport and work). It explains perfectly, in simple language, what breast cancer is, its treatment, side-effects, and how to cope with living with it. I especially like the advice on how to stay physically active throughout; this is particularly important for workout addicts like me. There are also good recommendations and links to other websites.

It is very easy to understand especially the meaning of medical and technical words, even for those whose first language is not English. It is appealing book, with a perfect font size, clear layout, good illustrations, and a positive and optimistic tone.

Local breast cancer recurrence (46-55) (January 2019)

This is one of the best books on breast cancer I have read. It covers medical aspects from diagnosis, through treatment, to living with the aftermath, but also topics such as body changes, infertility, sex, and mental health. It provides reassurance and has a chapter on where to go to for support and a comprehensive list of organisations and resources. Although aimed primarily at women with breast cancer it will also be interesting and informative for partners, carers, family members, and friends.

The authors are a breast cancer surgeon and a GP who have experienced breast cancer, but they do not resort to jargon unless necessary, for example when talking about chemotherapy. It is down to earth and readable, with an upbeat and reassuring tone. It is informative, but also enjoyable; each chapter is broken down into sections meaning there are no chunks of text to wade through, important if reading through the fog of ‘chemo brain’. It is slightly larger than an average paperback but pleasant to hold. The paper is slightly off white, perhaps because it is environmentally friendly. The endorsement from Macmillan on the cover and the information that the authors are survivors (a term I use to describe myself rather than patient or victim) instil confidence. There are no pictures but several helpful and informative diagrams.

There is something for everyone and I won’t hesitate to recommend it. I like the fact that it is a comprehensive guide covering all aspects of treatment and related issues. It is upbeat and sensitive, using the authors’ experiences where they aid the narrative. It also covers breast cancer during pregnancy, in men, and in LGBT+ people, subjects ignored by many ‘comprehensive’ guides.

I wish it had been around when I was diagnosed. It explains almost everything you want to know, and things you didn’t know you needed to know! The fact that the authors have had breast cancer gives the feeling that they know what they are talking about – as professionals and as patients as vulnerable and scared as the rest of us. No book can cover it all, but this comes close and there are signposts to further information. I would like to see more reference to Macmillan than just the website, particularly the excellent range of booklets and the helpline; however, the authors are probably trying to be nonpartisan. An excellent addition to any cancer library.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (January 2019)

The complete guide to breast cancer is exactly that. The authors are a breast cancer surgeon and a GP, experts in their field, now experiencing the mental and physical effects of a breast cancer diagnosis. The book takes us step by step through diagnosis and treatment and is full of useful advice. I felt I was having a chat with a knowledgeable friend who was able to give me honest and reliable advice.

It looks authoritative but is easy to understand, although I had to look up “cis” (in the chapter about gender). I like the spacing and the font, the illustrations, and the logical approach, taking the reader through what happens at each stage. Each chapter includes perspectives from the authors as health professionals, what happened when they were diagnosed, how it affected them mentally and physically. There is a useful list of organisations and I like the list of questions to ask at appointments (especially if you can’t find the words to ask them) and the chapter whether various diets work.

This is perhaps a unique book; two health professionals and experts in their field, are diagnosed with breast cancer and write about how it affected them. It is like a conversation with a consultant with useful advice being given. It will be useful for those with a breast cancer diagnosis, or someone supporting a friend or family member. However, it is very honest and might be a difficult read for some people.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (January 2019)

This is a no-nonsense, practical, yet informative book. It starts from how you will feel on diagnosis, to living with cancer once treatment is complete. It deals with the situation holistically and includes the effects on friends and family. I wish I had read it at the beginning of my cancer journey. However, on reflection, I think the reader can find helpful information at any stage on the journey, which of course never ends.

It is written in a way that is easy to understand for the lay person but not patronising for professionals with varying degrees of knowledge about the subject. There are technical terms naturally, but they are explained. The general layout is good, with simple, clear illustrations. The links to websites and other books are useful as is the sequential way the book evolves with cross-references throughout to other chapters. I like how that experiential information is scattered throughout the book in vignettes.

The beauty of a book by professionals who have had a personal experience is that they have the knowledge base to share; only those who belong to the ‘club’ no one wants to join truly know how it feels to live with cancer. The first page can feel like an electric shock! It is very blunt and to the point – it made me cry! – but once you get used to the style and realise that the no-nonsense approach is helpful, it all makes sense. Once I started, I wanted to keep reading as I recognised so much of the information and it resonated with so much of my experience.

Breast cancer survivor (56-65) (January 2019)

This book will be very useful for someone recently diagnosed with breast cancer and a partner or carer. It is most useful at diagnosis, with a helpful guide to treatments and, most important, a list of questions to ask the clinical team. It is easy to understand. Most terms are explained apart from TENS in the palliative care section. I didn't understand what a TENS machine was and there is no glossary. I like the font (nice and large). There are not many illustrations; perhaps some more could have helped to explain some aspects more easily?

I really like the experience that both authors bring; it makes the book more personal. I also like the questions to ask your doctor/consultant in each section. These are very useful for a recently diagnosed patient; they help you to take control of the situation. I wish I'd had this book when first diagnosed. It is one of the best books I have reviewed, and I am sure it will help many people. I recommend it, especially to those newly diagnosed. It provides useful facts but also offers some emotional support through the real-life experiences of both authors. The blurb on the back cover sums it up, "packed full of all the things the authors wished they'd know when they were diagnosed, and tips on how to cope with the treatments and beyond, this is the only book you need to guide you through your breast cancer diagnosis". Excellent read.

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

A brilliant book covering all aspects of breast cancer: what is happening to your body; treatments and side-effects; and the emotional challenge of diagnosis and living with cancer. It touches aspects less commonly addressed, such as relationships, breast cancer in men and secondary breast cancer. The authors use their experiences to help the reader relate to the text and to demonstrate differences in treatment and how they coped. It could overwhelm someone newly diagnosed if read in its entirety but has invaluable insights to help patients make sense of what they have been advised by their healthcare team. It will be immensely useful for family members.

The content is arranged in a logical order and the contents page clearly signposts what is covered in each section allowing the reader to select parts relevant to their circumstances or that they want to read about. The text is easy to understand and includes lots of cross-references to explanations elsewhere in the book.

The fact that the authors are health professionals who have had cancer makes this book unique. I like the useful tips, e.g. what to take to chemotherapy, how to tell others about your diagnosis and the useful lists, e.g. questions for your surgeon and about research trials. I like how it explains clearly the roles of staff in a typical healthcare team; it can be hard to know which questions to direct to whom when first introduced to team members. I have a different cancer, but still found much of the book insightful; many of the emotional aspects are common, irrespective of cancer.

Ovarian cancer patient (36-45) (October 2018)

This is a useful guide for anyone with breast cancer, at any stage, and their family and friends. Healthcare professionals will find it useful when supporting patients. It covers the whole journey from symptoms and diagnosis to living with secondary disease, with sections for men with breast cancer and the LGBTQ community. There is also an extremely useful chapter about the science of breast cancer that covers trials and research. It explains this complicated aspect well, leaving readers with the necessary information to feel empowered.

I cannot fault it for readability. Each chapter describes a different aspect and logically and carefully leads into the next. Although the authors are doctors, they are skilful in explaining medical jargon. The whole book is written in a way that makes it easy to pick up and put down; readers can enjoy the book over time and to suit them. It is aesthetically appealing and feels good quality. The typeface and font size are just right. There are appropriate illustrations throughout, but nothing is lost by not having photos. The tone is reassuring, and it is easy to be drawn into reading further.

I couldn't put it down. I like everything about this book, especially that both authors are doctors who have experienced the breast cancer journey. Their experiential writing draws the reader into each chapter because the book is very real and honest. It is pitched at a perfect level in that anyone could find it useful – female or male patients, family, or healthcare professionals. In fact, all breast cancer professionals should read this book for a real insight in to what it is like to have breast cancer. The authors acknowledge that whilst they thought they were understanding and empathic before their own diagnoses, they realised that they had not truly understood the sheer impact of diagnosis and what it's like when treatment is finished.

This book is worth its weight in gold and I cannot rate it highly enough. As a nurse and cancer patient, it is the one book I would wholeheartedly recommend to breast cancer patients, their carers and health care professionals. It is written in an honest and real way because both authors have been through breast cancer. Their medical experience and common-sense approach adds to the immense value of this book. It is the best “go-to” book for anyone navigating the highs and lows of breast cancer and aspects will be of benefit to other cancer patients as well.

Living with ovarian cancer and breast cancer survivor; Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Specialist (46-55) (October 2018)



Elements of this book will be useful for anyone involved with anyone living with and beyond breast cancer. It would have been useful for family members, who felt that they needed to know what was going to happen with my treatment.

It sets out some useful key points about active treatment, e.g. information about different treatment plans and how to live well beyond active treatment. It trashes some cancer myths – mainly about ‘miracle’ cures and diets – and explains how medics make decisions about our care and treatment. I found it interesting to read all about the treatment that I had and found that I could understand and process the

information much more easily than when I was experiencing the treatment. However, I was surprised that it did not seem to note that many hospitals send patients home on the same day as surgery. Being reassured about this might be useful.

The content is in a logical order, apart from the chapter on surgery, after those on surgical interventions and breast reconstruction. Each chapter stands alone, so you can dip in and out rather than read from start to end. It's reasonably easy to read and understand. However, apart from some diagrams relating to surgical and medical procedures and a few infographics, there is not much visual material. It relies on text to convey messages and needs good literacy to get through it. Each element is explained as it goes along, but there is no glossary; however, the index is incredibly useful. I read many academic texts and it looks and feels like one of these. The cover is not appealing, and if I did not follow the authors on social media, I would not have picked it up. It is pink, and I do have a problem with this. I like the tone, which is objective but balanced by personal comment and snippets from blogs by others.

It covers the huge expanse of life during and after treatment and, importantly, emotional support. It talks about relationships and sex and managing secondary cancer. I like the fact that there is also a chapter about the experiences of LGBTQ+ patients- this is to be applauded. However, I worry that the authors' experiences of getting back to work and achieving their goals might put some people off. These experiences are possibly meant to be 'inspirational', but they can be challenging. The ideas of doing your bit, fundraising, getting back to a high-flying career, even working (and thinking) during treatment feeds into the narratives of a 'good patient'. (I may be reacting to this as an academic who, after going back to work, has little patience for the immense pressure of higher education and has decided to leave!)

This is a very thorough A to Z of breast cancer but the layout of the book, and the issues about being a 'good' cancer patient have stopped me from giving it five stars. The aesthetics of the book are not appealing, and it does not always entice you to read more. However, the information about the process of treatment is incredibly useful and reading this after finishing active treatment has helped me to think through the enormity of what has happened to me. I have already recommended it to people working in cancer treatment who have not been cancer patients.

Living beyond breast cancer (46-55) (March 2019)

This is written for patients but may be better suited to partners or carers. The authors are doctors and use language that is mostly easy to understand. Technical language that cannot be avoided is easy to understand as the authors go into some detail to bring the reader up to speed and use diagrams to explain the point further. It's a hefty book and not one that fits neatly into a handbag, so it is a bit of a faff to carry around.

Except for the chapter on secondary breast cancer, the tone is generally reassuring. The chapter on secondary breast cancer could have been developed further (despite the authors not having experienced this themselves). This is a scary area and a doctor's perspective would be helpful. The book is well researched, authoritative and full of clear explanations. If you and your loved ones do not understand what your doctors mean, this is a helpful guide to navigate conversations.

My main concern is that it is a tome and you are not left wondering what the authors do. They have tried to make it accessible, but it is a doctor's book. I can't imagine having the strength of mind, during chemo, to start it, yet alone finish it. It is aimed at patients, but most will be overwhelmed by the information that they already receive from healthcare professionals. Perhaps the authors intend readers to dip in and out rather than read it cover to cover; if so, it is a useful encyclopaedia of what to expect.

This is a helpful book that can help patients, and the support network cut through the challenges they make face when meeting with their oncologist. It arms the reader with knowledge and lots of it. At the level of each chapter, it is accessible, but the length and size of the book may put off some. However, although I struggled to complete it, it was worthwhile, and I would recommend it; I believe that being armed with helpful and well-researched facts is very important to the cancer community.

Bone cancer survivor (26-35) (March 2019)

It is only when you find out more about breast cancer that you realise that it is not a death sentence, that there are many treatments available, and that new treatments and trials are available all the time. This book introduces many aspects of breast cancer and I could not wait to start reading it as soon as it arrived.

There is no glossary, but it is easy to understand, and the language is appropriate for someone with no knowledge of breast cancer. I am not sure if the information about margins is correct. Mine was 0.5 mm; my surgeon told me that I got clear margins although my oncologist told me that the margin was small. I noticed a few typos, for example: "The real damage comes when these snake-oil doctors then encourage cancer patients to forego traditional medicine treatment..." (should say medical treatment) (p. 67); and "Therefore you need to have empty stomach" (p. 125).

I like that the authors' advice is based on their experiences, such as not having a nipple after surgery and being left with a stump, and the many references to further information. I've done a lot of research, but I wish that I had read this first; it has given me a condensed version of the many hours that I have spent on research.

Living with breast cancer (46-55) (February 2019)

This will be useful for anyone with an interest in breast cancer, at all stages from diagnosis to living beyond cancer. It is concise and clear. The cover has a lot of text on it and does look like a reference book. The paper inside is a little rough in texture and can be uncomfortable when reading. The layout is mainly textual and can be quite laborious to read.

It helps that the authors are doctors who have experienced breast cancer and I like the factual, no-nonsense tone throughout. However, it is a rather 'heavy' and intense read at times due to the seriousness of the subject. I allowed myself time to read each chapter and skimmed through sections that were unappealing or irrelevant.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (November 2018)

A good time to read this book is after diagnosis as it starts with cancer as a disease, how it happens, and the different types, which people will be able to relate to. It's a good guide to investigations and treatment options, which can help patients ask the right questions when talking to health professionals. It is also a useful read for health professionals, who could use some of the information to communicate or explain clinical terms and procedures to patients.

It is written from a patient perspective and terms are explained as they arise making the whole read more manageable. It is an appealing book with a good size font. The illustrations aid understanding of various clinical terms and procedures.

This is a good reference source for anyone affected by cancer. It helps the patient to take control; the options and choices discussed strongly flag up individuality yet manage to cover a wide spectrum of people. The scenarios based on experiences will help readers to relate and the guidance on appropriate questions to ask shows the commonality from a human perspective when faced with the word 'cancer'. Regardless of the situation, there is always a way to seek support and learn new skills in managing changes. I particularly like how it provides guidance throughout the cancer journey in an orderly manner making it easier for the reader to visit areas of relevance at that moment in time or whenever they feel a need to revisit.

Living with the consequences of breast cancer (56-65) (November 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.

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

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

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