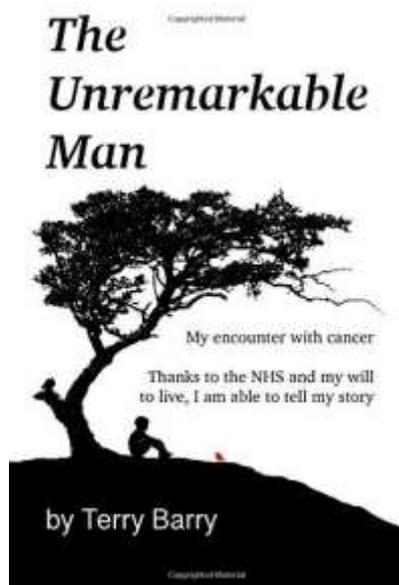


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



The unremarkable man (2018)

Barry T.
Self-published using CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018.
356pp.
ISBN 9781720542186.

Average star rating 3.6 (out of 5)

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This well-written book would be good for someone who has been newly diagnosed or has just started their cancer journey. Carers, family, friends and health professionals will also find it useful. It is very informative and would help someone going through the same illness as the author. I found it interesting how he used smiley faces to show his results, instead of long sentences of medical terms.

I found it very easy to understand. I already understood some of the medical terms but even if you didn't, it's in appropriate language that anyone can understand. The author covers the topic in a logical order; he digresses slightly but that all still fits in with the theme of the book. It is very appealing; the cover doesn't give anything away. The typeface is easy to read.

Overall, this is a very useful book. I recommend it.

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

Don't be put off by the length of this book! It is well presented and very well written in a positive and immensely readable style that moves along at a good pace. Terry Barry was 63 when he was diagnosed with leukaemia. This book covers his experiences between mid-2011, when he first consulted his GP about pain in the area around his kidneys, and 2016, when he had been cancer-free for five years.

Chemotherapy was started immediately, and treatment was spread over the first four months. This period is narrated in detail and with great clarity, through daily diary entries. An abbreviated diary format is used for the remainder of the book. As well as details of the drugs and their dosages, a system of smiley faces is used to show the results of blood tests, temperature, and blood pressure readings. The various medical terms are well explained too. Together, this makes it much easier for a reader to understand what was going on as his treatment progressed.

Throughout, Terry is very frank about the effects on him of his various experiences. This could help not only fellow-patients, but also their families, friends, and those who care for them. Areas such as nausea, diarrhoea (a frequent occurrence), headaches, stomach cramps, and hair loss are all covered. Also, the cumulative effects of chemotherapy are mentioned – itching, nausea, metallic taste, and headaches.

The importance of regular support from family and friends is spelled out. It was particularly necessary during his various periods of isolation. Throughout, the medical narrative is interspersed with snippets on family matters, meet-ups with friends, and new friendships made in hospital. As well as covering the continuing medical check-ups, importantly, the latter part of the book also describes the process of returning to work, enjoying overseas holidays again, and even having a pacemaker fitted.

A very helpful and well-written book, with good descriptions of exactly what is involved.

Carer for wife who has had bowel cancer twice (66-75) (December 2018)



This is useful to help people understand the side-effects and debility that are part of the treatment and understand the emotional affects it has not just on the patient but everyone who is involved in the day-to-day life of the patient. I like the author's emotional honesty about how fragile he felt during treatment and after going into remission. For someone who is struggling to understand if their emotions are "normal", it is particularly useful.

At times it is difficult to read and quite lengthy and could have been condensed. However, I guess with it being based on a diary it was important for the author not to miss out anything that he felt appropriate on any day. It did take a bit of getting into, but I enjoyed the references to his life outside of cancer, e.g. when he was a boy. It made it real and I could identify with the fact that when one is coping with a possible death sentence you do reflect on your life in greater detail, particularly when days often seem long and tedious.

Former non-Hodgkin lymphoma patient (56-65) (May 2019)

Firstly, this book demonstrates in plain English what the realities of treatment are – things are easier to deal with if you can picture them in advance. Secondly, it deals with the aftermath of treatment and the challenges that patients face following news of remission. It gives a realistic description of just how difficult chemo can be and the toll of treatment on your physical and mental health. It will help anyone fearing the unknown. I only had day-case chemo, was young and fit, but even then, found it very difficult. An often-ignored aspect of cancer is the mental damage it can have. Many people think "Oh well done! You're cured now, on you go...", yet we live under its shadow for the rest of our lives. That's not to say we aren't grateful for being cured!

It is a nice size book, with an appealing title and cover and appropriate use of photos. It is very easy to read and understand, in clear, chronological order and there is also a glossary for further assistance. The tone is realistic. Although I have not had leukaemia. I have had a blood cancer and a master's degree in biochemistry and studied blood cancer and I did not note any errors (although my experience was over a decade ago). I like the use of smiley faces for blood test results – nice and simple.

It doesn't sugar-coat the issues, but at the same time there's an overwhelming sense of positivity. I did lose some sympathy for the author when he noted he hadn't attended the funerals of two people close to him because he already had plans. I am not trying to be overly critical here, it is just the way I felt. Perhaps those comments could be removed or changed slightly? It almost came across as if he was too busy.

This is a very useful, interesting and, above all, realistic book. It provides a basic introduction to some of the technical elements of treatment and tackles emotional issues. It helps to spell out the realities of treatment but never feels negative. It will help patients to focus on what is to come and to come to terms with their illness.

I had Hodgkin lymphoma 11 years ago and papillary thyroid cancer, partial lobectomy in 2018 (36-45) (April 2019)



This is an engaging insight into living with a blood cancer. It is useful in its description of the day-to-day struggles through diagnosis to treatment and recovery. The author provides an unsentimental and unfussy account of his journey from diagnosis, through to treatment and recovery.

He writes from experience and the book is written chronologically. It is very easy to understand; no glossary is necessary, and the language is appropriate for the layperson. The layout is appealing, and it offers an easy, engaging read. There are personal images throughout but nothing of a graphic nature.

I like the author's honesty and his life-affirming approach to an often difficult, emotive subject. It's an engaging, undemanding read, suitable for readers newly diagnosed or undergoing treatment for cancer. He describes how cancer affects the family dynamic and permeates every aspect of life, with candour and a lack of self-pity.

Leukaemia and transitional cell carcinoma patient (56-65) (June 2019)

This is a good book with a lot of information about leukaemia. It is well written and narrated and easy to understand, based on the author's diary. It does not seem that anything is off-limits. As someone who has had radiotherapy and chemotherapy without side-effects, it was good to be able to try to understand the side-effects.

The author refers often to his will to live but does not really talk about it. It is more about facts than life itself. Nevertheless, it is worth reading for those who have had cancer and those who may not have had such a close encounter. It helps readers understand some of the symptoms and needs of people with cancer better. Overall, very articulate, describing the condition well. The cover could be more colourful.

I had melanoma medulloblastoma (Under 25) (January 2019)

This is a personal account of living through acute myeloid leukaemia, the treatment, the impact on the author's life and other complications along the way. The author based it on his diary, which he found after treatment when relatively well; looking back is difficult and painful. The style is chatty, almost as if sitting down with the author. Overall, however, I found it lacking somehow, just not my cup of tea, perhaps.

The cover illustration makes it look more like a children's book. The layout is fine as is the paper quality, but the font is small. I found the italics for speech annoying and unnecessary, but I like the smiley/not-so-smiley faces to illustrate blood counts. This makes it very easy to understand. Consultants could take note and follow suit.

Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (October 2018)



This book may be valuable for someone who has leukaemia, and their family. It may help someone who is about to go through treatment understand the highs and lows of the illness and the toll that treatment takes on the body. The author did survive treatment and went on to live a normal life. He does write about one of his friends with the same condition who sadly did not survive.

It is based on the author's diary and in logical order. I didn't notice any mistakes or inaccuracies. It is written in layman's language and easy to understand – all medical terms are explained as the book progresses. The title is appealing, and I like the cover. The quality of the book and paper are good, and the typeface is fine.

What I like about this book is the author's honesty and the section where he gives his wife an opportunity to write about her feelings during his cancer journey. What I don't like is that it is set out like a diary and that there is a lot of repetition. I'm not a great fan of book based on diaries; that's just my personal choice. I did get a bit bored at times and I found myself skipping pages to get to the end.

I learned more about leukaemia and the treatment involved but I don't think I would recommend it. It's not a book I would have on the shelf at the cancer information centre where I work.

Breast cancer 2011 (66-75) (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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