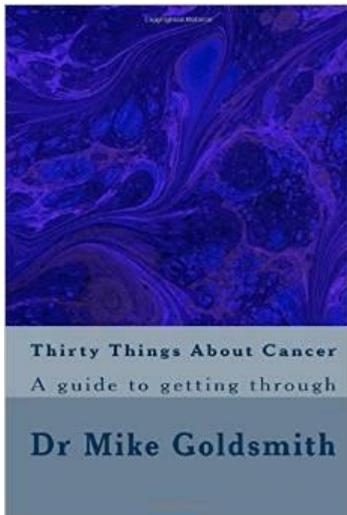


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



Thirty things about cancer. A guide to getting through (2015)

Goldsmith M.

Grammaticus Books, 2015. 76pp.

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Average star rating 4.0 (out of 5)

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This is one of the best books I've read on cancer and how to deal with it, great for those trying to come to terms with a diagnosis, going through cancer, or involved with someone who is. It handles coping with diagnosis particularly well and has advice on asking questions, as well as what to expect during treatment. It is also an excellent book for health professionals; it really shows how it feels when you're diagnosed, as well as how it feels to do the more mundane things, such as wait for treatment or see your oncologist. This is often overlooked but can be the most frightening aspect in many ways; it's often when your mind goes into overdrive thinking 'what if...'

It flows nicely and is very easy to understand. There's no need for a glossary, as it's written for the layman and reads like a magazine article: approachable, upbeat and very informative, without leaving the reader feeling lost. The topics are relevant and straightforward and at the end there are some interesting statistics showing, amongst other things, the life expectancy of someone born in various decades. There are also definitions of cancer stages and treatments, and lists of charities.

The fact that the book is so short works in its favour. The chapters are also short and, again, this works well; it is great for the early days when you can't concentrate on much, other than the fact you've been diagnosed. I like the fact that it's positive, to the point and written in a calm, approachable manner. It will alleviate much of the fear for many readers because it talks about living with cancer, rather than it being something to be terrified of. It also encourages the reader to do everything at their own pace, hopefully removing some of the feeling that you 'should' be doing or feeling something. It encourages you to do whatever feels right for you.

This is an excellent book and I'd recommend it for anyone going through cancer, or who knows someone who is. Its tone is straightforward and positive, without being unrealistic. I'd particularly recommend it for someone who, like me, was diagnosed relatively young. It doesn't view cancer as something that means your life is over. Rather, it suggests you compromise: Skype rather than visit friends if you're too tired; watch a DVD instead of going to the cinema if your immune system isn't up to it.

Lymphoma survivor (36-45) (August 2015)

This is a sound, comprehensive book for people who want an introduction to cancer. It provides basic information for people who know nothing but want a comprehensive overview and it gives a good historical background to cancer in the UK.

It is very easy to understand; it is written at a level that everyone can understand and the information is arranged in clear sections. The print is a good size. The general tone is optimistic and positive and draws the reader in as though the author is speaking to them directly and really is concerned about them, which may be of great help to patients. He addresses issues that many patients will want to ask and that most books will not cover; for example, section three covers worrying and how to cope with this and affirms that it is a normal state to be expected.

I like how the book provides the reader with all the main points concerning a diagnosis of cancer without overwhelming with detail. The information is presented in an easy to understand format that allows the more interested reader to pursue points in more detail elsewhere. The back of the book is full of useful reference material, practical and otherwise. Hopefully the statistics won't be too off putting; reading about mean survival times could be daunting although the author does seek to reassure.

This great little book fills a gap in the market and will be gladly received by many cancer patients. It is not very detailed but is a good foundation for those wanting a broad overview. Perhaps it should be given to every newly diagnosed cancer patient or certainly recommended by their doctor! I will probably recommend it, depending on the person and how much detail they want.

Breast cancer patient (56-65) (June 2015)

This book could be used by anyone but is most useful for someone with cancer and whoever else might be involved. It gives questions to ask that might not be thought of when first diagnosed. The book was written by someone who was diagnosed with cancer but is not a victim. It shows there is a life with cancer even during treatment.

The book is logical, starting with an introduction, then the thirty things about cancer, before solid facts at the conclusion. It is very easy to understand and read. The layout and design are good. Unfortunately, there are wrong page reference numbers on various pages but the book is short enough for this to not be a nuisance.

I like that it gives facts and doesn't hold back. Fact 26 Get Over It. Great. I like the tone – that even having cancer does not mean life stops. The comparison of eye and dental appointments with oncology appointments is good. The whole feeling that cancer is part of one's life but not all the life after treatment. This book is the way I try to stay positive. One day I will breathe out and not breathe in again but until then I am alive. I wish I had had this book at my diagnosis.

Uterine adenocarcinoma and serous cell carcinoma survivor (56-65) (June 2015)

This sensible, book might well be helpful right at the beginning of the cancer journey when it is so easy to be overwhelmed by the disastrous news of a cancer diagnosis. It is calm, not over cheerful, reveals that people feel very bad at this stage and has suggestions about what to do – and what not to do. The author has been there too.

It is a very short book of less than 50 pages of text plus some pages of further information. The order is logical and the book flows quite well, given that the author has chosen a format of thirty points. He is an experienced science writer and the language is very readable and easy to understand; most technical words are explained when they are used and are used only where it is helpful to know them when dealing with the oncology staff – they are a well-chosen selection.

It's a plain little book, without illustrations, printed in a large well-spaced font, with a couple of pages of index. The paper is good quality, the binding satisfactory, and the cover is plain and not arresting in appearance – you could read it on the bus without being noticed. I noticed a small number of obvious mistakes – misspellings or a missing word here and there. Authors cannot proofread for themselves without a few mistakes and omissions but publishers sometimes insist they do and the inaccuracies are not so many that they are a nuisance.

I like the author's tone. He was as dismayed as anybody else by a cancer diagnosis but he starts with a realistic dose of hopeful thoughts, without overdoing this.

For those who want to be prepared by knowing what might happen, this book would be very useful, and it is interesting to read what this author found important through his treatment. I would recommend it to those who want to know more. I've given it five stars because of the calm, realistic, and generally accurate presentation.

Living with breast cancer (Over 75) (June 2015)

This is a real insight into how to cope with cancer, practical and full of useful tips and ideas you might not have thought of. It would be useful for anyone affected by cancer at all stages of the cancer journey – at the beginning it can prepare you, in the middle of treatment or check-ups it can bring fresh ideas. I'm at the end of the journey and looking back I recognised things I knew and did and some I should have thought of!

I did struggle with the format, although it makes it easy to pick up and put down; numbering wouldn't help either, perhaps subject sections? Each topic has a clear start and there is a logical beginning and end; the middle, although a hotchpotch, I am sure has some order. It is not technical but there is a good range of appendices; these are useful, not too much and include a very useful explanation of the scans that can be done – I like this a lot. The language is comforting and sometimes very funny – the author has been there and knows! It is an easy read, quite heart-warming in places. The author's honesty comes through, his humour too and lots of hope!

It is a good read to get your head around the subject and where you are at now, with ideas for other things you should consider or do. It's a reminder of what you have done well so far and the author did make me smile several times and laugh out loud too – not easy when the subject is cancer! I would want to read it again, perhaps on

the anniversary of the end of my treatment. That's a good sign that the book has appealed to me and my thoughts about cancer. Although it seems basic and slight, the information, help and insight into cancer, its treatment and the aftermath, is useful to have in one place. It is an easy read, but does bring back memories and feelings and makes you think. It could help families and professionals see what loved ones and patients are going through emotionally and so should not be underestimated. I was very glad to have been able to read and enjoy it! I would definitely recommend it to the right person and at the right time.

Womb cancer survivor (46-55) (June 2015)

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and finished it in just over an hour. It is a very easy read and full of simple yet practical suggestions for coping with cancer. I found pretty much all of it very useful; there were aspects that I already done or understood, but it was pleasantly reassuring for me to have those things/feelings validated and reinforced by someone else.

As mentioned, a very easy read; I was keen to move on from each topic to the next as I wanted to hear/read what the author had to say. I like the fact that all the sections are small; some are very small, literally one paragraph, but that made it simple to say, I'll just read the next section and then the next one... and so on. It's one of the easiest reads I've had; it flowed beautifully. The only time technical terms are used is to draw attention to the fact that technical terms are sometimes used and not always appropriately. There is however, a glossary that covers many other terms used in cancer treatment which could be useful for patients.

I like the simplicity of the cover but purple is my favourite colour! However, it could get lost, which would be a shame as it is a great book. There are no pictures/photos but these really aren't needed. The author's tone suited me perfectly; I even laughed out loud a couple of times, which proves to me it hit the spot.

The author didn't waffle and try to pad the book out, it is simple, short, yet full of useful information and hints and tips. As with most books of this type, the author makes it clear that this is based on his experience and that the suggestions are his and might not suit everyone. Additionally, the author has included a great deal of useful and interesting information at the back of the book – websites, charities, facts and stats – which makes this book useful as a reference point as well. There was nothing I disliked. I would happily read any other books Dr Goldsmith has written.

I have already recommended this book to my cancer friends and that's within 24 hours of receiving it and 12 hours of reading it!

Breast cancer survivor (36-45) (June 2015)

You, or your partner, have just been diagnosed with cancer. Your mind is racing with questions, you want answers now! This short book by someone that has been on a cancer journey will provide many answers and give you an informed platform from which to delve further. It is most relevant immediately post diagnosis. People have little knowledge of cancer until personal circumstances force them to delve deeper.

The author has written many books and that professional flow comes through. His credibility is enhanced by his own cancer journey. It is an easy book to read with paragraphs and text nicely spaced on crisp white paper. There is no glossary, but it is not overly technical and terms are described as they arise. The conversational style is appropriate. There are no photos or diagrams, but the book is not lacking them. It is a slim book and the blue monochromatic cover doesn't grab attention, but the title and subtitle certainly arouse interest.

The "Useful websites" page lists only a few major charities. It will never be complete but there are many very good specific cancer websites and as well as those highlighted in the book, I'd recommend a Google enquiry of the cancer type and a suffix of "cancer charity" e.g. "brain tumour cancer charity".

This book gives a lot of information in a small package; here are 30 things about cancer and here are solutions for dealing with them. It could be easily overlooked on a shelf or mistaken for a booklet, you'd expect a weighty tome for such a serious subject. Find it and you will be rewarded with a quick, easy and highly relevant read. The title and subtitle perfectly sum up the content. Thirty points, all highly relevant, are described and solutions given in the first 39 pages, while the rest of the book lists websites and books for further explanation. There is a prevailing sense of optimism, something the patient will welcome if they have just been diagnosed. A couple of hours reading it will put the patient/carer in a much better position to ask informed questions; it also gives an element of reassurance. My hunger for information back in 2005 would have gone a long way to being satisfied if I'd had this book. A must read.

In remission for a Grade 4 glioblastoma multiforme, (56-65) (May 2015)

This is a thoroughly good read, very thought provoking. It is useful from diagnosis, through treatment, to beyond.

It is well presented and easy to read; the reader can quickly flick to pages of interest. It is easy to understand and light hearted when required. The author goes into enough explanation, probably because he 'has been there'. It flows well, including comments on previous questions. The contents list provides a structured view of subjects. It can be read quickly for reference and then in detail when required. It does refer to Macmillan nurses when discussing treatment; I was treated by the local NHS haematology ward but referred to the local Macmillan supported hospice if required.

Overall, a very good read, with short explanations of treatment anyone can understand. It reminds me of my 'journey' through treatment. I recommend it, especially at the start of treatment.

Lymphoma patient (66-75) (May 2015)

This is an excellent resource for cancer patients, particularly those at the beginning of their diagnosis. It provides a good balance of facts written in a way that supports the reader emotionally. It is straightforward, factual, down to earth and human without being overly emotional.

It flows very well in an easy to read and digest format. The author writes in a very clear and down-to-earth fashion. If you should need further clarification, there is more information about scans, stages and treatments at the end. It is generally an appealing book with clear headings, in clear type on good quality paper. The tone is positive and supportive whilst the book provides just enough information to be useful rather than alarming. A cancer diagnosis throws up so many worries, questions and confusion. I like how the author has remembered to explain in a simple fashion what cancer is and that he has pointed out some pitfalls and things to be wary of, e.g. some internet sites and blogs.

Five stars for all-round helpfulness. I recommend it to anybody affected by cancer – it is an extremely good place to start to gain the understanding and knowledge to manage a cancer diagnosis. I would have found it very useful at diagnosis.

Living after breast cancer (56-65) (May 2015)

The title describes this book exactly. It's not a cancer textbook but covers the practical aspects of dealing with the cancer journey from diagnosis to after treatment has ended – nothing fancy, no false promises, no condescending or pitying language. These are situations you're more than likely to find yourself in at some stage, and here are some tips on what to expect and to help you deal with them. It is mainly for someone with a recent diagnosis who is about to start their cancer journey.

It's well written in plain, everyday language. It's easy to read and I found it was as if someone was talking to me, rather than me reading sentences on a page. Any medical terms are explained, and there is a good explanation in good, friendly language of the different types of scans that the patient may come across. The 30 sections are clearly marked, with straightforward headings and descriptions. It's a thin book, easy to pick up and then put down for later. The cover's main colour is somehow soothing, I don't know why, it's just a feeling.

I like the fact that it's not a book about cancer. It's a book I would like to have had with me when I got my diagnosis, and to have kept with me every stage. It covers aspects of having cancer that probably won't be discussed in hospital appointments, e.g. don't expect your appointment time to be the time you'll be seen, don't be surprised if you suddenly find yourself feeling very low. I was particularly relieved to read that, as I'd had occasional unexpected dips and a couple of sudden tearful moments that came from nowhere. It's a relief to know it wasn't just me.

This is one of the simplest, easiest to read books for someone with cancer, that I've read. It's not a book to go to for facts and information on cancer, it's to help get through the different things we'll have to deal with.

In remission from bowel cancer (56-65) (May 2015)

This book will be most useful shortly after initial diagnosis as this is where the author begins his advice. It flows coherently and logically, is easy to understand and the language is friendly and warm. The author uses the end of the book to explain scans, stages of cancer and treatments.

The cover, although simple, is attractive and the paper is high quality. The typeface is appropriate for the average reader. The author's tone is great. I found humour and compassion in his writing, comforting and reassuring for patients. I like the fact he uses his cancer experience as the basis for his book – it makes the reader feel that it is "real". From my experience, the book is "spot on". The experiences the author had, I had. I would guess this be the case across the board. It's useful, real advice.

I found it a great read and I finished my treatment in March. The chapters most relevant to me now concentrate on anxiety and death. If I had had access to this book when first diagnosed I think it would have helped me greatly.

Breast cancer patient (26-35) (May 2015)

This is most useful for cancer patients, especially at the point of diagnosis. It encourages the patient to adopt an active and positive mental approach to tackling the illness. It also contains specific practical information and ideas. It may help carers, family and friends in that it contains sources of useful advice, but the best advice would be "read this book"! The structure is loosely chronological and the content flows well. It is clearly written using everyday language. The fact that it is short and concise is appealing in itself! A very readable booklet.

There is much to like, notably: good advice on how to approach the illness; good insights on what to expect; an engaging written style with practical language, humour and personal disclosure; and simple and practical lists and referencing at the back. I have a couple of gripes: firstly, I found the tone a little patronising in places, e.g. how to make friends and remember names; secondly, the book uses the language of cancer as a battle; I find this very unhelpful and I know many other patients do too because it logically leads to us being labelled as winners and losers – rather offensive if you lose through no fault of your own!

The author makes claims about the effect of positive thinking on recovery without citing any evidence and this does contradict the advice from my own distinguished oncologist. I'd like to see a warning that patients will receive lots of advice from medical practitioners, some of whom are not best-placed to offer it but who nonetheless feel compelled to do so. I received several differing diagnoses and prognoses from professionals (radiologist, registrar, surgeon, GP and oncologist) some of which were wildly inaccurate and extremely worrying. I'd also like to see more on the potential impact of chemotherapy – I was completely unprepared for the emotional and intellectual effects - and more advice on the immediate post-cancer stage – I was unprepared for the psychological aftermath where some symptoms resembled post-traumatic stress. However, overall this is the most practical and accessible book of its type I've read. A great starting point for anyone with cancer.

Testicular cancer survivor (56-65) (May 2015)



Virtually every aspect of living with cancer is covered in this comprehensive book. It will be useful for anyone affected by cancer, if they can get past the cover. The author goes into reasonable depth on virtually every nuance appertaining to each chapter. It is superb – especially chapter 28 – with good advice throughout. There is a substantial final chapter on useful statistics which adds to the book's value.

It is very easy to understand; the text is intentionally broken down into manageable chunks using language and anecdotes that are clear and logical. This structure of thirty sections means it can be picked up as and when needed using the well-laid out index. The author evidently researched his work well because he felt he had to. Chapter 5 deals with this 'homework'. The internal layout is about right for the average reader, but the cover is dire. The contents (and they're exceptionally good) do not deserve this unappealing design of what seems to be a biopsy section of a large purple tumour, 75% de-saturated in colour... The cover font matches the design; weird kerning and sitting within the bottom third of the cover, emphasising the 'tumour' image further.

This is an excellent, valuable book, written in a clear and concise manner. However, the cover means that some people will walk on by to something that advertises itself better. It deserves 4½ stars as it stands now but 5 if the cover is redesigned.

In remission from renal cell carcinoma (46-55) (August 2015)

This book has useful tips on how to deal and prepare for appointments, tests, results and treatment plans. It gives a realist picture on what to expect. It's most useful for someone with cancer; it would be difficult for someone without (or not close to someone with cancer) to relate to.

It deals with the topic in a logical order: diagnosis; dealing with investigations; appointments/results; treatments and their side effects; looking to the future. It is easy to read and understand, in a large print. The section at the back describing scans, how they work, the stages of cancer, and treatments is very useful. There is also a section on charities, warning signs, and causes and a list of further reading.

It is a very plain looking book, but the title suggests it is a self-help book and would encourage light reading to help anyone through the stages of cancer. It is easy to hold and to read, using clear, simple language, and the short sections are useful if you are feeling tired and want to read only a couple of pages.

There are lots of very helpful tips on how to approach and deal with different aspects of cancer and the "journey". I found the sections at the back as mentioned above very interesting and helpful.

Living with oligodendroglioma (26-35) (August 2015)

This has practical, useful advice on general aspects of what to expect and how to cope with a diagnosis of cancer and its treatment, for example: how to inform relatives and friends in a way that doesn't create problems. It will be useful for those who are diagnosed, treated and recover as has the author but perhaps less useful for those with advanced disease.

It is very concise with the thirty 'things' described in the first forty-five pages, following the order of diagnosis, treatment and recovery. Each 'thing' is described separately with little overlap. I like the 30 'things' that are described and would have found them useful to have read at the start of my own cancer journey.

It is easy to understand with only a few technical words; these are explained in the text and there is no need for a glossary. The book has a durable cover with a fairly sombre design. The paper quality, typeface and size are acceptable. There are no illustrations or photos. The author's tone is practical as he shares some of his own experiences and sometimes what he should have done or said instead.

There is nothing I found really to dislike in the book, although in places it seems a bit simplistic. Kidney cancer is not included in the list of cancers for "Further reading: specific cancers" on page 51.

This is the first edition and fills a gap not filled by other more specialised books. It is a useful general little book for people to read at the beginning of a diagnosis of cancer that is not too advanced.

Kidney cancer survivor (66-75) (July 2015)

This book is useful for understanding some of the things that one faces after diagnosis. It is very easy to read and informative and not too bulky. The typeface and size make it easy to read and I like the organisation of the contents into "thirty" things about cancer. Because the author has been through it himself he covers a lot of areas of what you might expect. Perhaps it should have been more generic about all cancers; I understand that it was written as a result of his experience, but it may be helpful to include some information about the most common cancers.

It would have been so helpful whilst I was going through treatment. One comment I would like to make that is relevant to my experience is that you shouldn't be afraid to complain if you are unhappy with any aspect of treatment. I had a bad experience with the NHS, specifically with the consultant whose care I was under. He was very reluctant to give me much information and lied to me to stop me from going the private route. Four weeks into diagnosis I still didn't know how bad my cancer was so decided to go private; within a week, I had all my tests/scans and had my operation. In hindsight, I should have not let myself be fobbed off by the consultant and gone privately earlier or maybe asked to change consultants.

Living with breast cancer (although one year all clear) (56-65) (July 2015)

I found this book very easy to understand and readers should have no problems with it. It covers all the concerns that someone affected by cancer may have and the possible scenarios. The issues are all concerns that I had and felt, from the initial shock of being told I had cancer, through all the various stages of treatment and recovery from major surgery. The only information that some people may not be comfortable with is the life expectancy statistics based on year of birth (p. 69).

The content is excellent, but I've marked it down due to the cover, which is bland and doesn't stand out. A brighter colour would make a difference.

Oesophageal cancer patient (66-75) (July 2015)

This book would be useful to anyone who is affected by cancer in any way – patient, carer, or even if you're fit and well. The most useful aspects are the medical issues covered and the emotional aspects, especially talking to other cancer patients. It gives a good oversight about a person who has had cancer.

The author handles the topic in a logical order but taking somebody with you (Point 10) should be the first thing you are told, and you should ask them to take notes for you. It is easy to understand, with a good explanation of the different scans and major charities. This may have been better at the beginning of the book (I had never heard of Maggie's Centres before and didn't realise what they were until I got to the end). Some of the grammar is poor and it needs proof reading; for example, in the section on specific cancers it should refer the reader from mesothelioma to lung cancer, not skin cancer. The cover is a bit dull and uninteresting, but it's difficult to know what to put on the front of a book about cancer. The typeface and size are good and easily readable. The author's tone is blunt and to the point.

I like the fact it is short and to the point. Each section is not too long and gives the reader a brief introduction to cancer. I like it being to the point and hard hitting but other recently diagnosed cancer patients may not. There is a good selection of websites to visit and further reading matter and a good section on scans.

The author calls himself Dr Mike Goldsmith and this gives the impression that he is a medical doctor. In the introduction, he says he's not, but what's the point of using this title when it's unrelated to cancer and the medical world. I don't like the title of Point 6 (You are going to die). We all know this, but cancer patients don't want to read it – you've been thinking that from the day of diagnosis. I want positive words and thinking, not negative thoughts. I also don't like the author being so anti alternative medicines – some do work. He says they don't or the NHS would use them but the reason the NHS does not use them is because they are not produced by pharmaceutical companies. I would like more reference to holistic therapies. These have helped me and others I know in their treatment.

Overall, I found the book useful as it provides an all-round view of cancer and I will probably recommend it to others.

Stage 4 lung cancer patient (46-55) (June 2015)

I found this book very interesting and easy to understand and would love to have read it when I was diagnosed. It is useful for all aspects of dealing with cancer and I like how it makes you feel more positive about dealing with cancer.

Living with breast cancer (36-45) (June 2015)

This is a simple, well-written little book. It is easy to follow, covering the journey logically and clearly. The language is very simple with little technical vocabulary. There are a few explanations where necessary and these are clear. There are one or two minor typing/spelling errors but nothing of a major nature. It is a little dull in presentation and as a paperback it lacks impact.

It is very "light" but the references make up for it. It is not comfortable to refer to these as you read, but as a source for future reference they are very valuable. Even without the text they are very useful for all aspects of the support services available to people affected by cancer. Major charities and social services are listed in a clear format and there is also a supporting website that may be of interest to many readers. A very useful item for anyone affected by cancer to have at their side.

Living with prostate cancer (Over 75) (June 2015)

This would be useful for anyone affected by cancer. It is very easy to understand; the author understands cancer from a patient's point of view and there are explanations of some terms at the end. The inside is fine – there are no illustrations or photos, but they aren't necessary – but the cover is a little dull and wouldn't catch my eye.

It isn't preachy or condescending; it's one person's approach to dealing with cancer with very helpful practical advice. It may not be so useful for those who have already been dealing with cancer, hospitals, and appointments for a long time. It is also a little short – I would have been happy to read more.

Stage 4 malignant melanoma patient (36-45) (June 2015)

This book will appeal to most people and is very easy to read; it is written simply using layman's language and flows in an acceptable manner. There are lists of explanations and statistics at the back. On page 36 the author offers the reader the chance to suggest hints, tips or comments for the next edition. Some of the statistics could be omitted, e.g. pages 68-69.

I like its simplicity and the fact that it calls a spade a spade with no frills, which is as it should be. My thoughts. You have to be aware of the recipient before recommending any literature but as far as I'm concerned this is near perfect for the layman.

In remission from colon cancer (66-75) (May 2015)

This is particularly good for anyone recently diagnosed with cancer. The author is a science writer rather than a medical doctor but has had treatment for bowel cancer and writes from a very personal and human perspective. It is far from a 'doom and gloom' book though and there are some laugh-out-loud moments as he recounts his experiences with a stoma and how his dog helped with his recovery. I could particularly relate to his discussion on how cancer is all about 'waiting' – waiting for appointments, tests, scans, and results. However, all in all, it is a pretty upbeat book, which emphasises the many positive outcomes that are possible and probable today.

It is a slender book of just 72 pages with a no-nonsense cover. (The cover does have an infuriating tendency to curl though!) The typeface is larger than usual which makes it easy to read. The style is sensible and well thought out. There are web links at the end to various resources, suggestions for further reading and an index.

Living with breast cancer (66-75) (May 2015)

This book deserves a wide audience but is most useful for those recently diagnosed or scared of having further investigation into a suspected cancer. It has useful tips for those starting treatment and hope for those nearing completion. If I had set out to write it I would have said, very nearly, exactly what Mike Goldsmith says. I like the use of positive statistics, while accepting that everyone is different and one size does not fit all. I reckon I agree with about 85% of the content.

It's a fast first read and one can go back to relevant passages easily. It is very easy to understand. The description of treatments and scans at the end is excellent. It could be presented to anyone from early teens on without worry. I spotted a few misprints and spelling mistakes; although minor they interrupt the flow. Is it too late to rectify these? The tone is just right, upbeat without being frivolous, educational but not dry. The layout is good and the short, concise passages help because one can re-read relevant sections easily. The typeface is perfectly acceptable to my wife and I, but the cover is bland, not very eye catching and looks a bit depressing!

I'm not a statistician and I haven't had colon cancer, but I didn't spot anything I could pinpoint as inaccurate. I wouldn't tell patients to buy a pet when they can barely look after themselves and when their partner (if they have one) has enough on their plate. I wouldn't have been able to exercise a dog for months and my wife would have thrown me out if I'd come home with one, likewise a cat!

One star off for poor cover design and Mike's recommendation of a hot milky drink to help you sleep...yuck (and not possible if you are feeding through a tube!). In a few places, I made margin notes to the effect of "bland", "blasé" or "self-evident" but I do realise that it is a very personal take on Mike's experiences. I disagree with his closing words in Section 30. My wife and I have found it impossible, almost two years on, to put my cancer behind me. Side-effects, health scares, permanent changes to my abilities and lifestyle make moving on very difficult. More needs to be done in this area of "surviving cancer" and Mike ducks the issue in the interest of brevity. I may even email him regarding this issue. He would have done well to touch on the economic impact of cancer on families and offered a few simple words of advice or reassurance in that area. Something else I'm tempted to take up with him.

It is difficult to make suggestions on a broad scale in a country that treats similar cancers differently depending on which part of our tiny island one lives. Resources, drugs, treatment plans, outcomes are terribly asynchronous given we are all treated by the NHS or the same professionals in their private capacity. That said, I think Mike has done an excellent job. The reading list is particularly useful as is the page on the definitions of cancer stages. I didn't find it harrowing or depressing. Treatment schedules can be complicated and overwhelming. Life after cancer can be confusing and strange. I hope this book helps future patients, and their carers, prepare for the new life they face – I think it will help prepare them better emotionally to face the coming months. I hope too that it helps cancer professionals see things from the patient's perspective and, if need be, alter their approach.

In recovery from cancer of the tongue (56-65) (May 2015)

This book covers the issues discussed at various levels so would be informative to a wide range of people. It's useful for day-to-day understanding of the highs and lows and the reasons for frustration. It doesn't start at diagnosis, but from the point where you tell people about your diagnosis and only then goes back to the point where you're having initial discussions with your oncologist. This isn't a distraction but, on first reading, I thought it had just jumped in and was going to miss that fateful moment when you receive a diagnosis. It does cover it but not with the depth of emotions you experience at that moment and in the following days.

It is very easy to understand and quite comprehensive. There is no glossary but there is sufficient explanation in the text and the author has gone through the same thing. He does include comments and expansions in brackets, which is a little irritating as you read, but a minor point in comparison with the wealth of information, such as further references, symptoms, causes, different types of scans and a great section on the scoring system for tumours explained in a very understandable manner. The cover illustration is simple and relevant. The layout is simple and aids navigation and the typeface is very easy to read. It is a concise book, to the point, and therefore slim – a good size to slip into a bag.

It is a good general interest book, useful to share with someone who may not fully understand exactly what you go through when you have cancer. It does have technical information and a lot of explanations, but, for me, it tries to express how you feel in the course of illness. I like how it tries to capture the emotions you go through when you receive a cancer diagnosis and undergo treatment. For five stars, I would like a little more content. It could have covered many more topics but each topic is dealt with well and the book has credibility because the author is a fellow patient.

It covers emotions and feelings that few other books touch upon. I would have welcomed this when first told that I had a large tumour on one of my kidneys. Everything rushes through your head and this book would certainly have helped to start to put some of them into perspective. I definitely recommend it and certainly for anyone recently diagnosed.

Kidney cancer patient; undergone treatment now under surveillance (56-65) (May 2015)



This is a fast and lively read, with lots of useful information from one patient's perspective. Mike has a direct, no-punches-pulled style as might be expected from a scientist. He has no truck with alternative treatments and there's nothing about complementary therapies or nutrition to support the cancer journey. But there is plenty of down-to-earth stuff on worrying, expecting the unexpected, waiting around, getting outdoors. I found it honest, entertaining at times and would have found it helpful to read whilst waiting for a scan in the early days of my diagnosis. Dare I say its style might appeal more to men?

Living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (56-65) (November 2015)

These 30 tips on how to get on with your journey are aimed at cancer patients. It is not about your treatment but about coping with your new life. It very easy to read and understand, written in everyday language and nicely presented on decent paper.

I like the fact that some of the tips surprised me, such as: it's not just my hospital that has long waiting times (this made it easier to accept lengthy waiting times); you're not odd if you want to attend appointments alone; encouraging people to get outside into green spaces (this really lifts mood). I like the extra information after the tips; it's basic but the websites, extra reading and details of major charities are helpful. It is also mentally positive, while accepting that we can have unexpected down days.

I didn't think that it would show me anything new. It did, in a nice, easy, down-to-earth, daily living way, for example, which friend or family member would be best to talk to or ask for help (we resonate better with some people than others). It is a very positive book about some things that may seem negative. I have given it three stars only because it is so short. I will probably recommend people to borrow it.

Living with cervical cancer (56-65) (June 2015)

This has lots of interesting ideas but is most useful for those having treatment; it might help them to ask questions. There are some interesting ideas, e.g. how to tell people after a diagnosis. The use of a diary is a great idea. There is some good information at the end explaining the stages, treatments and signs of cancer.

It is written from a patient's point of view so it is easy to understand. The layout is great, in easy to read paragraphs that make the book easy to dip into. The size of text is good, and the cover and pages have a nice feel.

The author is not a medical doctor; it states this in the introduction, but will everyone read this? It is based on his experiences and they are only his experiences; I disagreed with some as they did not match my thoughts and treatments. However, there is some good information and it is easy to read and understand.

Had sarcoma twice 10 years and 20 years ago (56-65) (June 2015)

The coverage of different aspects of cancer may make this book particularly relevant to people in the early stages and could be especially useful as a prompt to someone who has just been diagnosed, or their carer. There are useful tips on dealing with the news, treatment and life afterwards, albeit limited to the two years since the author's diagnosis. However, the content is limited to the author's experience of bowel cancer, which has skewed the book. There is surprisingly little about living with the side-effects of treatment, the impact of having cancer and how it can affect your view of life, and, the most glaring omission of all, a lack of acknowledgement that, for some people, cancer treatments (especially surgery and radiotherapy) can bring permanent changes to the body, which can be difficult to deal with emotionally and practically. It would be helpful to include some mention of the potential for such changes, and the adjustment to the "new normal" that comes from them. These omissions reflect the limited scope of the author's experience.

The sequence of the thirty tips is not particularly logical. The first tip is lengthy and waffling – the rest are shorter and pithier – and seems to be out of place. The order makes it quite an unsatisfactory read in some ways. However, it is possible that other readers will find the sequence to their liking. In many ways, it doesn't matter; it's such a short book that most readers will be able to flick through to find the parts that are relevant to them and skip those that aren't. In the list of viruses under Causes (p.58), human papilloma virus is described as making "people more vulnerable to cervical cancer"; this ignores other cancers caused by HPV, including the cancer I have.

It is easy enough to understand. I was comfortable with the level of technical words but wonder how much of this would be grasped by someone who hasn't been through the process themselves. The style is inconsistent; some points are written in a chatty style, others more formally, and this makes it hard to know at whom it is pitched. There are spelling errors that suggest limited access to a good editor.

It is clearly laid out and the concept is easy enough to follow; the format of thirty "things about cancer" makes it easy to dip in and out. It's fairly short and light on personal narrative, with no long exposition of the author's life. After a rather lengthy first point, the others are punchier and easier to grasp where he's going with it. The author talks from his own experience and has quite a chatty informal style of writing, which could make this book appealing to readers familiar with a blogging style of writing. The cover is bland, and the author's name is in a larger font than the title; this is odd as that kind of emphasis is usually reserved for well-known authors.

I would certainly recommend it to people who think they may have bowel cancer or are newly diagnosed. It is more relevant to the author's specific cancer than other types of cancer; this is inevitable in that it's written from a personal rather than a professional basis and doesn't claim to be anything other than the author's personal experiences. A more accurate title would be "My 30 top tips on getting through the first two years of bowel cancer". This is too long, but it would set a more realistic expectation of what the book will deliver.

Living with stage 4 tonsil cancer (46-55) (June 2015)

This book is most useful for someone who has had a recent diagnosis and is a little lost on where to start with their journey. It's a very honest and open set of tips for anyone affected by cancer – particularly someone with a diagnosis. It's not a heavy read and is a good place to start with some of the practicalities of living with cancer. The author is quite clear at the outset that he has gathered information from various sources and experiences and the reader should not take any research as fact. He encourages reading around the subject.

There's no real need for a particular order in the book, so the 30 Things appear to be in the order that the author felt best, starting with the initial diagnosis and moving on. It reads fine and is easy to understand, in plain English, with no real complexity. The explanation of the stages of cancer is clear. The quality of the book could be a little better and there are occasional spelling mistakes, but the content is good so it's not a big issue. The short length makes it feel somewhere between a booklet and an actual book, but I like the fact it isn't too long and detailed. I was able to read it in a couple of 30-minute sessions and came away with some interesting and useful insights that I may not have got from a book ten times as long.

Overall, it's a good book; it's not ground breaking and most of the information can be garnered elsewhere, but it helps summarise clearly and quickly some key points from someone with experience. Short, sharp and to the point and worth a quick read to get someone's personal view. The author does acknowledge it's about his experiences, but it sometimes feels that he is pushing his opinions a little; e.g. stating that alternative medicines don't work is a bad approach in my opinion. However, this is just one book and people should be encouraged to read a variety of material.

Living with kidney cancer (36-45) (June 2015)

This book appears to be targeted at cancer patients, particularly those who have recently been diagnosed. It introduces some common terminology associated with diagnosis and treatment, provides assurances around the emotions cancer typically evokes, practical suggestions on how to mentally process a cancer diagnosis and active steps that can be taken to help during treatment and beyond.

It is an easy read, digestible in less than two hours. The author conveys his advice around living with cancer in 30 concise points in a logical order, from learning of a diagnosis, through treatment, to beyond. He supplements these points with some definitions and facts at the end of the book, for example, pages 59-60 include a useful overview of the scans someone might experience during diagnosis and treatment. A useful list of further reading (with some specific recommendations for various cancers) is also included, along with some useful web links. The index is useful to help find relevant information later. Overall, it is written in an upbeat manner, giving the reader tools and practical advice to help take charge of their situation at a time when the loss of control can seem overwhelming. The cover and style of the book is very simple but conveys what it's about.

I particularly like point 2 – 'look after the people you tell'; it covers the complexities of sharing news with others, discussing the different ways people respond and how to keep them updated. Point 8 suggests patients diarise treatments, medication, doses,

key contacts, dates of key event; this is something I started doing and found incredibly useful to refer to in conversations with the many different health professionals I have encountered during my treatment. Point 26 talks of trying to reduce the focus on upcoming appointments/check-ups post treatment and allowing yourself to enjoy life; this resonates with me, having spent the period of my active treatment living from one appointment to the next and willing it to come around in the hope for reassurance or evidence the treatment is having some impact.

Point 1('It's a new world') makes a relevant point of being cautious about statistics you come across, but for someone like me who has tried to steer clear of statistics, the positioning of this section so early in the book made me very apprehensive about what I would read later. Point 5 advocates reading up on your illness and what you can do and stipulates there are certain foods and drinks that must be avoided; whilst this may be the case with certain cancer types, I've discovered a lack of conclusive evidence about diet in relation to my specific cancer type (although I'm aware of the theories around anti-cancer/ cancer fighting foods).

The 'facts and stats' section towards the end seems a bit lightweight in the sense that the figures don't appear to be adequately explained or in context. The mean survival rates included here are not specific to any cancer type, so I questioned what I could deduce. The 'causes' of cancer come across as very 'black and white' and seem to lack medical substantiation (although I'm aware some of the links are well known).

At times, it is written in a one-size-fits-all fashion, based on the author's experience; towards the end there is recognition that cancer and its treatment affect everyone differently but it would probably help the reader to keep this in mind as they read through the text from the beginning.

Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (May 2015)



This would be most useful for someone recently diagnosed. It is not technical and doesn't go into detail about any cancer but explains what to expect and the possible lifestyle changes. There are some useful tips: the best attitude to adopt after diagnosis; how not to worry too much; how to approach the bewildering technical terms you will come across; attitudes to keeping fit; and relationships with others.

It is very easy to understand with no technical terms, but several references are wrong. For example, page 15 refers to "Further reading" on page 47 instead of page 48, and in Point 9 (Don't take appointment times too seriously), the author suggests ways to pass time in the waiting room and recommends reading Point 19 (Naps conquer all), which is about sleeping; does he mean Point 18 (On waiting)? I'm not sure why he spells out the names of each point in capitals, i.e. "NINETEEN". In Point 1 (It's a new world), he says that most people diagnosed with cancer today will survive it, but doesn't cite the source of this statistic. In the same section, he mentions a new family of chemotherapy drugs that are more targeted but doesn't name them. He also mentions statistics on the likelihood of recurrence, but he

doesn't mention, for example, that treatments like chemotherapy can themselves cause their own new types of cancer. In Point 6 (You are going to die, but so is everyone else), he says that the average life expectancy today for a man aged 65 is 12 years but then he says in brackets that for someone born in the same year as you it's 66). Points 10 (Take someone with you) and 11 (...or don't) appear to contradict each other. In Point 4 (Pets can be life savers) he says that a dog will treat you the same as ever during a cancer diagnosis but straight after that they are sensitive to human feelings and will start taking your changing mood into account. In Point 15 (There are things to enjoy), the author says that, in his case, chemotherapy meant that he could eat whatever he liked; this is probably not good advice and in fact the question of diet is totally absent from this book. In Point 20 (Push your limits, gently), he talks about taking exercise but fails to mention that you should discuss things like this with your oncologist or medical professional first (although he does then advise this as an afterthought in Point 25 (Have things to look forward to)).

In such a short book, the author should stick to the relevant facts. He needn't go into so much detail about throwing balls for his dog or ways of communicating with others via the internet; these are probably not the first things you think about when you've received a cancer diagnosis. Much of the book is just common sense and, for most people, something a bit more substantial and with a bit more detail would be better.

Seminoma cancer patient (46-55) (May 2015)



This is a very quick and easy read (just 72 pages including a list of books and an index) and while it's most useful for someone with cancer, I found it disappointing as it could have been so much more. If it were a magazine article (albeit a long one), I would be happy with the lack of depth. However, it reads as though it was written without recourse to any research; some areas are poorly explained and there are some parts where it is evident that an editor would have been useful. In a couple of sections, the wording completely confused me, and I had trouble understanding what he meant (of course it might just be me, for example (p. 59): 'Unlike X-rays you might have to check your teeth, CT scans can detect soft tissues as well as bones and teeth.' The insertion of 'dental' before X-rays would have made it far clearer.

The information about clinical trials is misleading; it relates to (probably) phase 3 trials. Phase 1 is very different. Information about the different phases and research trials would have been good. I was concerned about the positioning of the information about clinical trials at 27, after 26 dealt with the end of treatment. Is he suggesting you enter trials AFTER your treatment has ended?

He states the MRI scanner is similar in appearance to the CT scanner, but it isn't; it's way scarier for anyone who is claustrophobic! In the section on 'Causes' he states that 'Most cancers happen where there are two or more of these causes working together' but doesn't go on to say that some just happen. He lists treatments, but doesn't include them all, so his list is incomplete. It also lacks explanation of the 'other treatment'. On page 19 he slates homeopathy without providing any evidence.

He has two lists of Further Reading; general and specific cancers. It seems he has been careful not to recommend these books, but in that case, how did he come up with the list? I doubt he read all the specific ones. Additionally, he hasn't cited the full bibliographic details and many of them are quite old and possibly out of date. It states in the introduction that the author is not a medical doctor and on the back cover that he is a science writer and researcher, but I think it is misleading (even if correct) to use his title on the front cover. He could have used PhD after his name.

It could be useful in the absence of any other information, as there are some good tips, but I don't think I would recommend it. I found it very disappointing and honestly think I could have done better.

Living with metastatic bowel cancer (46-55) (May 2015)

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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