Cancer Management: A Multidisciplinary Approach

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The fundamental principle behind this book, as stated by the publisher, The Oncology Group (also publisher of the journal ONCOLOGY and news magazine Oncology News International) was to provide a truly integrated, multidisciplinary approach to the management of cancer patients. For this updated 10th edition, the editors have enlisted 114 medical, surgical, and radiation oncologists, whose contributions provide an excellent overview of the important principles of cancer management.

The text is printed in a soft-covered handbook form that is easily portable. The 1,084 pages are well organized into 14 sections and subdivided into 47 easy-to-read chapters that give a comprehensive overview of the multiple facets of oncologic care. Besides the expected lung, breast, prostate, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, gynecologic, head and neck, central nervous system (CNS), sarcoma, and lymphoma sections, there are chapters on AIDS-related malignancies, myelodysplastic syndromes, leukemias, principles of hematopoietic cell transplants, and carcinomas of unknown primary sites.

An entire section (seven chapters) is devoted to palliative/supportive care (eg, management of pain, nausea/vomiting, depression/anxiety), and another section dedicated to the management of complications (eg, radiation toxicity, oncologic emergencies, paraneoplastic syndromes). Lastly, there are four appendices that outline chemotherapeutic drugs (agents, indications, dosing, and toxicities), performance scales, links for cancer information on the Internet, and FDA-approved oncology drugs. These appendices serve as excellent, quick references.

The chapters are well organized and concisely describe anatomy, pathology, epidemiology/etiology/risk factors, signs and symptoms, diagnostic testing, pathology, and treatment options. Included for each site are the AJCC TNM staging charts. Within the chapters, each disease site has very specific chemotherapy regimen tables that delineate the most common drug combinations with details regarding dosing and scheduling options, premedication recommendations, and toxicity management, which serve as an excellent reference for administering these drugs.

Many chapters also contain segments on screening recommendations, genetic predispositions/testing, follow-up guidelines, and prevention strategies, as appropriate for the disease. Unique to this manual are small gray “bullet boxes” found throughout the chapters, which abridge a seminal publication or abstract presented at a national conference, highlighting important recent research pertaining to the disease site. At the conclusion of each chapter, a brief list of suggested reading material is offered in lieu of the usual references.

Although the graphics within the text are limited, a very useful color atlas on the ABCDs of moles and melanomas helps differentiate between benign and malignant lesions and another color atlas depicts typical skin lesions. Some may consider the scarce illustrations in this textbook a shortcoming; most are basic, black-and-white, and pertain to anatomy. Likewise, there are very few diagnostic images, but the CNS and breast chapters contain several useful images along those lines.

In an effort to be concise, the authors have, to some extent, simplified the practice of oncology and omitted certain aspects of comprehensive management. Examples include details regarding radiation therapy techniques, controversies within the subspecialty practices, and future directions for prevention and/or treatment. The only major shortcoming in the book is the lack of reference
citations that most physicians are accustomed to finding at the end of a chapter. Although many important trials are discussed within the text of the chapters, there are no direct references to the publications. Despite this omission, the book has achieved its goal, with many details regarding surgical procedures, radiation therapy particulars (such as standard doses for each site, integration of radiation with systemic therapy, and brachytherapy options), as well as fine points on chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, novel therapeutic agents, and the overall management of the cancer patient. The book would be very useful for medical students, residents, and attending physicians. Although this portable, well-balanced manual does not provide the details required by a subspecialist, it achieves its fundamental objective, and is a good reference for general management in oncology.

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