



## **Book Review**

### **Handbook of Cancer Chemotherapy**

Editors: Roland T. Skeel and Neil A. Lachant, Fourth Edition, 1995, Little, Brown and Company,  
ISBN 0-316-79575-5

In many ways this is a remarkable book. There are no less than 35 contributing authors who have covered a large range of topics on cancer in 40 chapters. All this is compressed into a book of 740 pages that will (just) fit into the already overburdened pockets of a white coat. It would behove the owner to take good care of it, because at \$36.95 it is not cheap, but in terms of value for money it is impressive. Every page is packed with information, there is a multiplicity of tables and lists but the text is readable. There are explanations of the inscrutable abbreviations beloved by oncologists and there is always an account of the staging terminology for each region. Practical help abounds. The style is terse but consistent throughout the book which indicates extremely tight editorial control. The editors are to be congratulated on the huge effort they must have put in to achieve this, overcoming our Transatlantic cousins' tendency to verbosity.

The book is divided into four parts—basic principles, embodying 9 chapters, a single chapter part on the drugs used (very comprehensive and useful), 19 chapters covering all the major therapeutic applications of chemotherapy and finally 11 chapters on a variety of topics. The latter covers pain management, psychiatric problems, nursing, psychosocial issues and helpful items on safe handling of antineoplastic drugs.

The author of the chapter on Carcinomas of the Head and Neck admits that treatment of primaries is mainly by surgery or radiotherapy and as such does not attempt to cover the subject, but nonetheless succeeds in producing a thorough résumé of chemotherapeutic applications in this difficult region.

Some of the contents such as insurance and employment for cancer survivors are not relevant to the European scene and there is the perennial problem of names of drugs. It is to be hoped that this will ultimately be solved by the new international terminology. In general the authors are good at pointing out differences between U.S. and European techniques.

In summary, although this is a book mainly for those involved directly with cancer therapy, the editors have achieved a notable success in bringing together information from many sources, placing it into that rare category of Extremely Useful.

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