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Book Reviews

Cancer and Stress: Psychological, Biological and Coping Studies

Edited by Cary Cooper and Maggie Watson. Chichester, John Wiley and Sons, 1991. ISBN 0-471-93307-4. Cloth cover £39.95; paperback £15.00.

THIS BOOK, edited by two well-known authors within the field of psychosocial oncology, is a welcome addition to this rapidly developing field. The relationship between cancer and psychological factors, such as stress, personality and coping strategies, is one that has caused much interest, particularly over the last 30 years. Unfortunately, much of the early work was confused by too much reliance on anecdotal reports, unsubstantiated hypotheses and poor methodology in research investigations. Because of these faults the relationship between cancer and stress is one that many scientists have found hard to accept. Although much work still needs to be done, recent research using proper methodological techniques has shown beyond any real doubt that psychological factors play a part in the process of malignant disorders. This current book reviews many of these areas and presents up-to-date results and conclusions. I feel that few people could read this book and fail to be impressed by the increasing weight of evidence that shows that cancer and its sufferers cannot be fully understood without an awareness of the role that psychological factors play.

Cary Cooper and Maggie Watson have collected together a number of eminent authors and have divided the book into three sections, the first dealing with psychobiological mechanisms, the second with psychosocial and personality factors, and the third with coping and psychosocial interventions. Many of the authors have presented up-to-date references and certainly many of the review chapters do provide current data and theories. Obviously in such a rapidly developing field, how long they remain current theories remains to be seen.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter reviewing the role of psychoneuroimmunology by Sabbioni, the chapter on cancer prognosis by Watson and Ramirez, and that on psychosocial interventions by Mathieson and Stam. These three review chapters I feel will become essential reading for people wishing to learn about these subjects. There is also an interesting chapter on Chinese views of psychosocial oncology. It is of interest that the Chinese authors present evidence from research using western approaches, but also discuss the role of traditional Chinese medical theories and treatments within the field of cancer.

Unfortunately, this book suffers the same fault that many exhibit when there is a collection of different chapters by various authors. There is sometimes repetition between different chapters and the different styles of writing can occasionally be confusing. Some chapters are presented as pure reviews, whilst others concentrate on the author's own research—sometimes

concentrating on single studies that perhaps results in some of the topics being seen from rather narrow viewpoints. Nevertheless, I feel this fault is greatly outweighed by the many positive features of the book and I can heartily recommend it to both experienced workers and newcomers to the field.

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Paediatric Neuro-oncology: New Trends in Clinical Research

Edited by Roger J. Packer, W. Archie-Bleyer and Carl Pochedly. Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992. ISBN 3 7186 0524 4, ISSN 1044 4882. £28.00, \$48.00.

THIS BOOK is a compilation of some of the topics covered at an international symposium on Paediatric Neuro-oncology held in Seattle in June 1989. The meeting emphasised the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to the management and research of childhood central nervous system (CNS) tumours, and the text is an exciting reflection of this approach providing an excellent source of reference for anyone involved in the field. However, I have two general criticisms of the publication. Firstly, in the preface it is stated that "this book will act as a timely communication of advances in the epidemiology, biology, diagnosis and management . . .", but sadly some of the timeliness has been lost with almost 3 years elapsing between the time of the meeting and production of the book. Secondly, sections are devoted to advances in basic science, diagnosis, surgery and chemotherapy, all of which are admirable inclusions but it seems grossly imbalanced not to have included a section on advances in radiotherapy when this field is developing rapidly and while radiotherapy remains a major form of treatment for CNS tumours.

The book's introduction gives an overview, on a world scale, with regard to the size of the problem and the current facilities available for treating CNS tumours in children. The improved outcome for those treated in specialist centres is underlined and the benefits of multi-disciplinary management emphasised.

The first section is devoted to advances in diagnosis and basic science and the allocation of such a substantial section to this topic is most welcome. Chapters cover the application of monoclonal antibodies, cytogenetic techniques, gadolinium enhanced magnetic resonance evaluation, phosphorus nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy, and positron emission tomography and each provides a clear introduction, substantial original data and a useful summary. An inclusion that would