

## CLINICAL ONCOLOGY 3RD EDITION

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Reviewing a book on oncology is actually a rather daunting task and I have fewer qualms about admitting that this is my first oncology textbook review attempt than I do in actually doing the review. The first question I ask myself is "How can I possibly read more than 3000 pages in less than a month?" and the second is "What do I actually want out of a textbook in oncology in the first place?". The answer to the first question is that I cannot do it, nor should I attempt it – I need to be focused and targeted in my approach. As a medical oncologist, I think the answer to the second question is easier (and shows the way to address the first problem). I want an authoritative reference text that is clearly and logically set out; that contains a systematic approach to the whole of clinical oncology; that is well-referenced and that admits to controversy where controversy exists. An online version would also be a must in the modern world! One of my pet hates is the badly done index, so that will get extra scrutiny. A constant niggle in my brain is that in certain areas, such as the correct state-of-the-art chemotherapy regimen for stage 2 breast cancer, for example, any text book may be out of date before it is printed. Although, on reflection, there are vast areas in oncology where the content does not change very quickly, if at all, between editions.

So, to look in closer detail at my pet areas: the book itself is solid, and too heavy to hold. It is printed on good quality paper. The contents pages are well set out, in a logical manner, and I found them inviting - how appealing to be able to delve into a whole section on cancer-related venous thrombosis to check

what the latest is?! The layout is excellent. There are very good illustrations and I was delighted to find a CD ROM of all the illustrations at the back of the book with download instructions into a slide show. Key points are put in a box at top of the chapter, with hints for exam candidates. There is then a clinical relevance box at the end, just in case one thought it were all becoming rather removed from reality. Overall, this book has been very well planned.

On-line version: this is the first textbook I have come across that not only has a CD ROM, but also an online version, access to which can be bought with the book. It has the whole book, plus updates inserted into the text where new information has come to light. So I would highly recommend that if you are going to buy the book, you need to buy the online access too - it makes the whole thing so much better! For example, the book was printed in the first half of 2004 and the updates have been posted since 3rd June. There is even a news section so that items that haven't yet been inserted as updates in the text can be flagged. This gets rid of my complaint about books being out-of-date before they are printed. Tumour management sections had very timely updates, including recommendations on treatment of prostate, breast, colon and endometrial cancer.

However, just because the planning, layout and features are excellent, does not mean that this book is perfect. I found the section on Mucositis to be out-of-date with no news nor updates flagged. I suspect that supportive care in general is considered less important than other areas, although the chapter on Cancer in the Elderly is very good.

Overall, I would highly recommend this book, as it is comprehensive, well-planned and uses modern technology to the full. If I knew everything in it, I would be very knowledgeable indeed!

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