

## Nothing Personal – disturbing undercurrents in cancer care

**M Blennerhassett**

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In this book the author, Mitzi Blennerhassett, tells her story of anal cancer from the patient's perspective. She paints a depressing picture of being poorly understood by both the medical and nursing professions. She talks of trying to maintain a positive approach as her world evolves around cancer treatments and pain.

Mitzi's life, like many of our cancer patients, also has outside influences such as children and a marriage break-up to contend with during her cancer journey. Mitzi discusses ideas such as journaling, poems and art, which all helped her work through personal issues during her journey. Her poems and art are included in the book giving a very personal insight into her journey. At the end of her story she tells of becoming a survivor and how she became an advocate for patient's rights and has continued to work in this area.

The book highlights areas of mismanaged pain relief, poor care, psychosocial and ethical issues. However, at the end of each chapter the issues highlighted are discussed with points on what the patient/health professional interplay entailed and how it could be improved. Mitzi talks of the difficulties of obtaining accurate information from health professionals throughout her experience and what she perceived as the 'us and them' mentality of health professionals. The last chapters discuss the slowly changing health system which, although not Australian, highlights issues we as health professionals must continue to fight for in the best interest of our patients.

I would recommend this book to all members of the multidisciplinary team working in the oncology area. It would also provide an insight into the patient's perspective for health professionals, students and committee members dealing with oncology patients. I would not recommend this book to a patient at the beginning of their cancer journey, however it may be useful for carers and persons interested in improving patient advocacy.

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