A Guide to Cancer Genetics in Clinical Practice

Sue Clark
Tfm publishing (2009)
ISBN: 9781903378540
238 pages
RRP: $90.00

There is something wonderfully reassuring about a book where the title of the first chapter states cheerfully, "Genetics is not complicated".

A Guide to Cancer Genetics in Clinical Practice aims to appeal to a reader who seeks simple, concise, practical advice and it delivers just that. The slim volume of just over 200 pages takes the reader through the introduction to basic concepts in genetics and cancer genetics, main genetics syndromes and tumour types where genetics input is required. It delivers information in a well structured, orderly format, with key points summarised at the end of each chapter. Chapters are written from the perspective of a practicing clinician, mostly by practicing oncologists rather than geneticists alone.

While the authorship is international, reaching as far as New Zealand (no Australian contributions), the majority of authors are from the United Kingdom and there are many references in the book to the clinical recommendations based on the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines, which are often applicable to the Australian setting. Each chapter contains a paragraph on "the future", which offers a commentary on emerging issues and future developments. The book is easy to navigate, clearly laid out with clinical recommendations summarised in tables, and theoretical concepts illustrated with clinical cases.

The text takes a rather medical approach to cancer genetics and any multidisciplinary aspects of this field are well hidden in the last chapter, 'The future structure of care: cancer genetics'. As such, it is likely to appeal most to clinicians requiring quick, point of care information, just before a patient consultation (although I found the shortness of the paragraphs rather inviting for a more leisurely read for the sake of reading).

A guide to Cancer Genetics in Clinical Practice is likely to be too brief for those who already practice in the field of cancer genetics. However, for those of us who might have slept through the genetics lectures in medical schools, or more likely, learned genetics in the days of mating drosophila flies and garden peas, this book may serve as a useful and very accessible resource.

Bogda Koczwara, Department of Medical Oncology, Flinders Medical Centre, Bedford Park, South Australia.