BOOK REVIEW

Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology, 5th Edition

The first edition of Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology was published in 1982. Since then, a generation of oncologists has embraced this textbook as the basic reference source for their specialty. The fifth edition, with its sky-blue binding, is now available. All oncologists will be asking the perennial question: Do I need to purchase this new edition or will the older one suffice?

With more than 3100 pages, the book remains encyclopedic in its scope. Many of the chapters, however, have been rewritten by new contributors, and the changes were definitely for the better. Major revisions have been made to the format, with impressive expansion of the section concerning the basic science of cancer. Site-specific scientific breakthroughs introduce the appropriate chapters on clinical management. More emphasis has been placed on cancer prevention and epidemiology, and I expect further expansion here in the future. Comparing the fifth and fourth editions, I was left with only one conclusion: You will need to purchase the new edition.

One major deficiency in the “DeVita text” continues to be the lack of the new graphic design elements, as can be found in Clinical Oncology, edited by M. D. Abeloff, J. O. Armitage, A. S. Lichter, and J. E. Niederhuber. There should be detailed summaries at the head of each chapter. Outlines of treatment approaches, personal recommendations, and algorithms for decision-making should be mandatory for each of the clinical management chapters. With the fifth edition, we can find plenty of trees, but we lack guidance for seeing the forest. There is a plethora of dense text but not enough use of visual elements to make this a truly user-friendly textbook.

I cannot live without my Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology, yet I cannot recommend it as a first source for the novice or for those training to be oncologists. The fifth edition will remain as the seminal specialty bible for now. Major revision of the graphic design elements should ensure it primacy for the next generation of oncologists.

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Note
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Books Received


