Breast Cancer: a Guide to Detection and Multidisciplinary Therapy
M.H. Torosian (ed). Humana Press, Totowa, NJ, 2002, 368 pp, $150.00, £102.50, US$125.00

This book is divided into three sections. In the first section, Clinical Management, epidemiology and breast imaging are described in depth. Standard surgical, radiation and medical treatments for breast cancer are also discussed. This section gives up-to-date information about these treatments. Such information, particularly regarding the medical treatments, is presented very concisely and may be useful for newly qualified oncologists, but would not be considered very interesting for oncologists with a high level of expertise in breast cancer management. Moreover, complicated issues such as definition and management of micro-invasive carcinoma, choice of adjuvant chemotherapy, timing of radiotherapy and chemotherapy in early breast cancer, and duration and type of chemotherapy in metastatic patients are not discussed at a level that will be useful for experienced medical oncologists.

The second section, Special Clinical Situations, gives good information about important issues such as breast cancer during pregnancy and axillary adenopathy as the initial presentation of breast cancer. Other equally important issues, such as sarcoma and lymphoma of the breast, are less well presented.

In the third section, Current Controversies and Research, some issues, such as axillary node dissection and high-dose chemotherapy, are dealt with very informatively, whilst other continuously evolving areas of breast cancer treatment, such as immunotherapy and gene therapy, are given only a superficial discussion.

There are two major weak points of the book. First, in many chapters the text lacks reference citations or reports few references. This defect does not allow the reader to look up the original sources of the reported statements. Secondly, few summary tables are used; many chapters have few or no tables at all. This does not allow the reader to quickly see, for example, available studies about a certain issue; therefore one has to read through the whole text to find this information.

Overall, the style of the book, with its few references and summarization instead of in-depth description of some arguments, renders it suitable for readers other than experienced oncologists. When comparing this book with the breast cancer chapters of the widely used reference book Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology by De Vita et al., it does not add more information and on some issues even provides less information. Oncologists with a high level of expertise in breast cancer management and oncologists who already have access to Cancer: Principles and Practice of Oncology will probably not find additional useful information in this book.

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