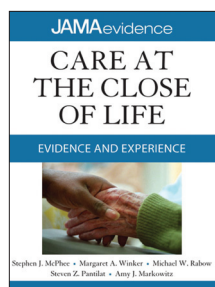


## BOOKS

**Care at the Close of Life: Evidence and Experience.** Stephen J. McPhee, Margaret A. Winker, Michael W. Rabow, Steven Z. Pantilat, and Amy J. Markowitz. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2010, softcover, 616 pages, \$70.



*Care at the Close of Life: Evidence and Experience* focuses on communication issues facing patients, families, and caregivers. The authors present real-life situations from these

very different perspectives. The text is instructive and targets the medical community to increase awareness in the care of the patient as a whole through physical, emotional, and spiritual considerations. This book is well suited for an oncology practitioner because its scope is the continuum of care from potential diagnosis to treatment to end of life. *Care at the Close of Life* also would be of great value to any medical student, resident, or nurse interested in palliative care.

Each chapter presents learning opportunities, with perspectives from the patient, caregiver, and family. Many of the situations bring to the forefront the feelings of frustration and helplessness that result when caregivers do not listen to their patients. Readers are meaningfully reminded in the book's forward, "When patients have only a short time to live, providing the right treatment at first attempt is critical because often there is no second chance" (p. xix).

The strength of this book is its focus on listening and communication. Situations presented do not always show the medical community at its best. These examples are used to present alternative workable solutions to the problems discussed. Other situations focus on the plight of the patient and the most optimal solution that uses the tools already available to relieve symptoms. One of the most powerful messages is in Chapter 5, "Managing an Acute Pain Crisis in a Patient With Advanced Cancer." This section describes a patient with unbearable pain that was uncontrolled with his

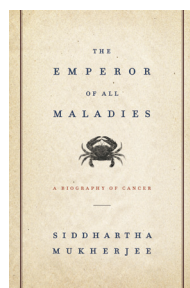
current medication regimen. The physicians presented the best management solution to the patient and his family. An explanation of the benefits and risks showed both to be great. Ultimately, the pain was controlled and the patient died peacefully with his family by his side.

A deficit of this book may be that the text is very busy with many tables and sidebars that detract from the flow of the material. However, the information contained in these tables is pertinent and educational.

*Care at the Close of Life* is not a book that is read cover to cover quickly. Readers should be aware that the text offers much to absorb and review. The book is unique in that it has value not only in the first read-through, but also in its usefulness as a reference guide that can be consulted again and again.

Annette M. Hallett, BSN, RN, is a palliative care coordinator at Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center in Toledo, OH.

**The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer.** Siddhartha Mukherjee. New York, NY: Scribner, 2010, hardcover, 472 pages, \$30.



*The Emperor of all Maladies: A Biography of Cancer.* Or does he? Mukherjee attributes cancer with human qualities and flaws, making this work feel like the biography of an undefeated foe.

Mukherjee uses an effective mix of patient cases, social and political historical analysis, and historical accounts of scientific and medical discoveries to chronicle cancer from ancient Egypt to 2010. He observes that cancer was once believed to be a single disease, with the potential of a universal cure, and is now known to be discrete diseases with differing treatment plans and prognoses. Cancer, the ever-changing chimera, has morphed from one to many enemies. He states, "To keep pace with this malady, you needed to keep inventing and rein-

venting, learning and unlearning strategies" (p. 470).

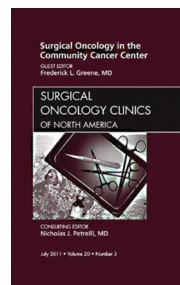
The book points out the barriers to major improvements in cancer prevention and shows how patient advocacy has pushed some new treatments out of the research laboratories to make them available for use. Readers may be interested to learn that many successful treatments have their origins in weapons development or the pursuit of commercial applications for newly discovered chemical compounds or processes. Mukherjee uses stories of his own patients to describe the challenges faced by others and the difficulties care providers encounter in understanding them. Although Mukherjee mentions the importance of prevention and early detection in the successful defeat of cancer, he ends the book by emphasizing the potential of future treatments. This is most likely because of his bias as an oncologist and researcher.

*The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* is an entertaining history of man's long battle to understand and overcome the most "relentless and insidious enemy" of mankind. This book is a valuable addition to the library of anyone who works with patients with cancer.

Susan Hansell, RN, BSN, MBA, is a staff nurse in the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit at Karmanos Cancer Institute in Detroit, MI.

## NEW RELEASES

**Surgical Oncology Clinics of North America: Surgical Oncology in the Community Cancer Center.** Frederick L. Greene and Nicholas J. Petrelli (Eds.). Philadelphia, PA: Saunders, 2011, hardcover, \$110.



This issue of *Surgical Oncology Clinics of North America*, guest edited by Frederick L. Greene, MD, focuses on surgical oncology in the community cancer center. An array of experts have come together

to explore topics on sarcoma management, minimally invasive esophagectomy, multidisciplinary clinics and the surgeon's role in the hospital cancer program, and breast cancer care in the