

Portrait of palliative medicine as a young art

→ Raphaël Brenner

This is an excellent reference book for anyone involved in palliative care. It covers every aspect of the specialty, and is accessible to medical professionals and lay readers alike.



Since it first appeared 12 years ago, the *Oxford textbook of palliative medicine* has become the gold standard text in its field. But palliative medicine is a fast-developing subject, and much has happened in the intervening period, as we can see in this new paperback edition.

From a mere handful of palliative care services, there are now over 8000 worldwide. The subject is being taught in many more medical schools and has acquired specialty status in several countries including the UK and Romania.

However, there is still a long way to go. Even in the affluent West, “for every person who receives good palliative care there must be hundreds or even thousands who need it and have no access to it,” write the authors.

They argue that the skills of palliative medicine depend first and foremost on attitudes, and they insist that a change in attitude is needed on the part of doctors “towards their patients, their needs and their care.” On every page, the book reaffirms the interrelation between the three groups involved in palliative care – patients, their families and health-

care providers – the importance of pluridisciplinarity and the need for respect. “If people know they are respected as part of the human family (and here developing countries have much to teach us), the ending of life can be a final fulfilment of all that has gone before,” notes Cicely Saunders, while a patient tells us “Loneliness is not so much a matter of being alone as of not belonging.”

Oxford textbook of palliative medicine

3rd edition

Edited by Derek Doyle, Geoffrey Hanks
Nathan Cherny and Kenneth Calman
Oxford University Press, 2005, 1269 pp
£59.95 (paperback)

This latest edition contains so many changes and innovations that it should almost be seen as a new book. Its 21 sections, written by authoritative, international contributors, deal with every aspect of palliative medicine: from the cultural, spiritual aspects of palliative medicine to symptom management of cancer, from paediatric palliative medicine to complex ethical and emotional issues.

Marking the importance with which the subject is regarded by the authors, the section on education and training has been almost entirely rewritten, and includes new chapters on the role of humanities in palliative medicine and on new technologies such as Internet learning.

Also new are chapters on complementary medicines (aromatherapy) and alternative medicine, and on the contribution to palliative medicine of allied health professions (music therapy, psychology, etc.).

While cancer remains at the centre of palliative medicine, much space is also devoted to non-malignant diseases and to new approaches to neurological disorders.

Finally, an excellent section on palliative medicine in the home reminds us that there are still a fortunate few who die in their own homes (24% in the UK, 56% in Italy).

While this is clearly a medical textbook, non-physicians will also find in it a wealth of knowledge. It is stimulating, thoughtful, and has an open-minded global approach. My only regret is that the layout could have been less cramped.

Neuroonkologie

Edited by Uwe Schlegel
Michael Weller and Manfred Westphal
Georg Thieme, 2005, 492 pp
euro 99.95

The editors and 24 co-authors of the second revised edition of this textbook of clinical neuro-oncology have managed a pedagogical tour-de-force.

They have made the complex issues involved in their discipline accessible to physicians, general practitioners and oncologists alike, without compromising on either depth or detail – the bibliography contains more than 2000 references.

Their approach is practice-oriented and up-to-date – they use the WHO 2000 classification for description of tumours.

The comprehensive content is complemented by a clear and well-designed layout. Plenty of pictures, diagrams and tables, together with the use of two-tone printing and boxes, combine to make it very user-friendly.

The authors also deal with various aspects of interdisciplinarity in neuro-oncology, including the treatment of tumour-induced pain and psychosocial rehabilitation.

This book is part of the Thieme Reference Series in neurology.



Supportive care of children with cancer:

Current therapy and guidelines from the Children's Oncology Group
Edited by Arnold J. Altman
The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004, 434 pp, \$33.95

Written by the Children's Oncology Group, the world's largest cooperative study group for children's cancer, this third edition of *Supportive Care of Children with Cancer* is a highly useful, ready-reference handbook for nurses, medical staff and oncologists involved in paediatric oncology care. It can be consulted for quick reviews at a patient's bedside and is fully up-to-date. Today, three out of four children with cancer can be cured. But the downside is that children with cancer have to undergo increasingly intensive treatment regimens. This book details the supportive care measures needed to sustain children through therapeutic ordeals and enable them to achieve the best possible quality of life. A significant contribution to the improved outcome for children with cancer is the recognition of the infectious, metabolic and haemorrhagic complications that can arise in disease and treatment interventions. The book covers these complications in depth and describes new approaches to pain management. It also includes a new chapter on burnout among paediatric oncology staff.

Sam à l'hôpital

Marianne Almira
Gallimard jeunesse/Giboulées
2005, 48 pp
euro 12.50

To find oneself from one day to the next in hospital because one has just been diagnosed with leukaemia is like undergoing punishment, except that no one has done anything wrong," writes Marianne Almira at the beginning of her book. Better than any textbook on psycho-oncology or supportive care written by scholarly physicians, *Sam* is a unique, first-hand testimony of a 13-year-old girl who was diagnosed with leukaemia.

To pass the time during the year she spent in hospital, Marianne drew her dog Sam as the cancer patient subjected to treatment by nurses and doctors. The result is an amazing strip-cartoon book illustrated and written with wit, sensitivity and intelligence.

It is a kind of hospital diary that is at the same time moving, funny (as when the physician prescribes the patient a blood test in an incomprehensible technical language), deeply instructive and full of hope. Through *Sam*, Marianne reveals to readers the unintended inhumanity of some medical staff.

Her book is a graphic portrayal of the feelings and needs of cancer patients. A must for everyone involved in oncology.

