

BOOK REVIEW

Clinical Approach to Oncology. P P Bapsy (Ed). 391pp.
Byword Viva Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 2004. Rs. 590.
Hardcover. ISBN 81-8193-010-X.

The specialities of oncology in general and medical oncology in particular have grown by leaps and bounds in the past two decades in India. At least five major centres provide subspecialty training in medical oncology. However the subject matter of oncology has been somewhat peripheral to the concerns of doctors undergoing post-graduate training in Medicine and Pediatrics, in part because of the traditional emphasis on cardiology, neurology, gastroenterology and pulmonary medicine. This situation is unjustified, given the increasing incidence and detection of many malignancies in this part of the world, and the major therapeutic advances that have recently taken place in oncology.

Exposure to well written textbooks in the formative stages of one's career is one of the major stimuli in decisions regarding career choices. This book, self-professedly, is targeted at doctors and students who aspire to specialize in oncology. On the whole it acquits itself admirably by this yardstick. The book has contributors from the three major specialties of medical, radiation and surgical oncology. It is organized in five coherent sections and thirty three chapters. Each chapter has been divided into subheadings that have been highlighted. The book is written in a simple, lucid style with very few grammatical errors. As aides-memoire the important points in each topic have been presented as bullets. Almost all chapters include well organized tables in standard format and few diagrams. The TNM staging system has been summarized accurately in tabular form for most

tumor sites. Unfortunately most students and many practicing doctors have a tendency to memorize staging information without appreciation of the underlying principles. A chapter explaining the philosophy and evolution of cancer staging would have been helpful for the beginner. The overall therapeutic policy has been concisely summarized for most tumours; for some tumour sites this has been done in a stagewise manner. The predominance of medical oncologists amongst the contributors is reflected in the content. Information on surgical and radiation therapy details is sketchy for many tumors. For example, the indications and contra-indications for limb salvage in soft-tissue and bone sarcomas should have been elaborated, since surgery is the mainstay of treatment for non-metastatic sarcomas. The section on Hematological Oncology is well written. The revised WHO classification scheme has been incorporated and the discussion on management includes recent advances like rituximab for 'B' cell lymphomas and thalidomide and bortezomib for myeloma.

The book could be improved in subsequent editions with some additions. The chapter on Epidemiology should include information about the specifics of India's National Cancer Control Program and National Cancer Registry Program. A chapter on the appropriate integration of various diagnostic modalities in cancer work-up, including PET-scanning, is in order. The references for all chapters have been compiled together at the end

of the book, just before the index. These are best presented at the end of each chapter for the benefit of readers who are stimulated to seek more information on a particular subject.

Dr. Bapsy, who is the Head of Medical Oncology at Kidwai Institute in Bangalore is a clinician, teacher and researcher of repute. 'Clinical Approach to Oncology' is an impressive

effort on her part to introduce the complex field of oncology to the beginner. This book will provide a useful overview of the subject to postgraduate students seeking entry into oncology courses and for oncology fellows in the early part of their training.

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IJMPO would like to publish 'Profile of a Cancer Centre' or an Oncology department in a major teaching institute/hospital in India outlining its history, facilities available, and achievements in the field of research, teaching and patient care. Please send your write-up (up to 2000 words) with 2-3 photographs.