

Basics of Oncology

Second Edition

Frederick O. Stephens
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 Springer

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Working in oncology is a very satisfying career. It is particularly satisfying to be able to help people with this most distressing and worrying health problem. Most patients are cured but for some cure is not a possibility with our present state of knowledge. All can be helped. In most cases our patients become our friends and some become very special friends. They honour us with their friendship and trust, and this makes our work feel more than worthwhile, indeed a special reward.

We are also grateful for our teachers of the past and for our present colleagues without whose cooperation our work would be of limited value and progress would be difficult.

Like all teachers, we are inspired by our students. We not only pass on knowledge to them, but we also learn from them. To have interested and enthusiastic students is a real stimulus and privilege.

As is obvious from the authorship of this book, we have been privileged to make close and lasting friendships across national borders and across borders of traditional disciplines. We treasure these friendships dearly from their personal aspects as well as being able to learn from each other and to stimulate each other in clinical work and research. It is sad that so much cancer is still with us, but the constant mutual commitment to improving methods of care and discovering new

information on prevention and treatment for the betterment of people everywhere is itself a reward, which we all share with respect and gratitude.

Finally we acknowledge that our work is demanding of time and energy. This is time and energy in which our wives, families and friends have so often had to make allowances for our absence. Without their love, support and acceptance of the conditions of our work, this work and our efficiency would be severely compromised. They have often joined us and at other times have had to stand by without us when we were concentrating on other things we could not always share with them. We especially owe our loved ones a debt of thanks and gratitude.

We proudly dedicate this book to all of these people.

Preface

Who Should Read This Book

In Western societies and other developed countries, cancer is the leading cause of death, after cardiovascular disease. It is therefore a major component of medical undergraduate curricula and of primary concern to nurses and allied health workers.

Presently most undergraduate students learn about cancer from a broad range of general and specialist books and journals. Medical students read about cancer in textbooks of surgery, pathology and cancer medicine as well as in general and specialist journals and from time to time in newspaper reports, in magazines and from various other sources.

We the authors teach, practise and conduct research in different specialty areas in different parts of the world. We agreed that we should write this book as an easily understood and general overview of cancer for students of medicine, nurse oncologists, students of medical sciences and other health professionals in all parts of the world. It is intended to serve as a basis for more detailed or specialised studies that will be needed in different areas of practice and in different countries. Different countries will emphasise different aspects according to their more specific community needs, incidence, traditions and available healthcare facilities and systems.

What This Book Is About

This book is intended to give an introduction to the scientific and clinical aspects of cancer, that is, the broad range of concepts of causes, pathology, clinical features, possible investigations, treatments and outcomes both for cancers in general and for the common cancers in different countries. It should be a basis for further study as appropriate for all areas of oncology no matter where it is practised or in what particular professional discipline. The purpose of this book is not to cover all social, personal, environmental or financial aspects of cancer nor to discuss details of supportive services available. These important aspects will differ in different countries with different social, medical and administrative services and facilities as well as different traditional practices and requirements. Ideal comprehensive facilities and

services may or may not be available. Other books, specifically written for students and practitioners in different countries with different curriculum requirements, may be needed to cover these aspects.

Objective of This Book

The objective of this book is to develop graded information from very basic to more sophisticated understanding of present knowledge about cancer. For some students, this may well meet all their needs, but for students wishing to undertake further studies in cancer, this book will serve as a sound basis for more detailed or specific studies.

To achieve this, the book will:

- Cover basic medical, scientific and clinical aspects of cancer.
- Explain how and why people develop cancer.
- Indicate how the body reacts to cancer.
- Describe how cancer presents.
- Outline principles of cancer prevention, investigation, diagnosis and management.

This information applies in all countries. It is the essential requirement for understanding cancer no matter where studied or practised. We believe this basic information about cancer is best introduced early in a student's career before other details of personal, psychological, social and management practices and traditions are studied in detail in different communities.

More detailed and comprehensive information on specialised areas of knowledge, research and practice is expanded in more specialised books and publications, some of which are listed in the final section of this book.

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Part I

The Cancer Problem