

Book Review: Handbook of Oncology Social Work: Psychosocial Care for People with Cancer

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The inaugural *Handbook of oncology social work: psychosocial care for people with cancer*, edited by Grace Christ, DSW/PhD; Carolyn Messner, DSW; and Lynn Behar, PhD, published by the Oxford University Press (OUP) in February 2015, is not just for social workers, it is a must read for all oncology practitioners. As a nurse, cancer educator, and researcher, I discovered numerous easily accessible psychosocial gems to support holistic care along the cancer continuum, or perhaps more importantly, as a friend, family member, and caregiver of people diagnosed with cancer, there are valuable insights that emerge throughout the *handbook* from the lens of people living with cancer, their caregivers, and practitioners. According to Carolyn Messner, DSW, one of the three editors and a chapter author, this foundational handbook was written to provide a repository for the breadth and scope of oncology social workers' clinical practice, education, research, policy, and program leadership in the psychosocial care of people with cancer and their families and has been very well received by people practicing within diverse disciplines.

This extensive handbook is well organized to accommodate focused inquiry. Information is presented in 108 diverse topic areas plus an epilogue which are organized into 19 sections written by 160 experts. Authors span professions including social workers, oncology nurses, physicians, chaplains, lawyers, and psychologists, all essential to recognize interprofessional expertise and collegial work, vital to provide comprehensive psychosocial care to patients, their caregivers, and the bereaved. Each of the 19 sections begins with an

accompanying 1- to 2-page overview. This introductory format is extended by highlighting key concepts and salient ideas at the beginning of each chapter. Additionally, there is a 22-page index which is a robust navigation tool. However, the devoted reader may choose to savor the knowledge and understandings that unfold throughout the 813 pages.

Light a fire in the fireplace, sip a cup of warm tea, and get comfortable for an insightful read. Many of us grapple in our personal relationships and professional experiences with how to effectively address the psychosocial needs of patients and their families experiencing cancer. The coverage of applicable content is extensive. The major psychosocial topics include the following: cancer across the continuum of care; survivorship; site-specific cancers; distress screening; research; quality of life; genetics; sociocultural and economic diversity; assessment and interventions with adults living with cancer, their families, and caregivers; parental cancer; children and adolescents; pediatrics; adult life-span issues; loss, grief, and bereavement; patient- and family-centered care; legal and ethical issues; care coordination; technology-integrated interventions; professional development and education; and building resilience in interprofessional settings. Section III entitled "Psychosocial challenges of site-specific cancers" includes insight from a cancer survivor's perspective of living with a rare cancer, how to support men challenged with prostate cancer, needs of patients experiencing hematologic cancers, as well as the unique fears and challenges when a person's cancer returns. Another section invites the reader to consider sociocultural and economic diversity and offers ways to improve access and health outcomes. Population-specific considerations include chapters to respectfully acknowledge and support diverse peoples diagnosed with cancer and their families such as immigrants, political refugees, and patients seeking asylum who have cancer; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals with cancer; indigenous peoples; and African

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Americans, Hispanic, and Latino populations. Special needs across the life spectrum are addressed throughout the chapters and highlighted within specific sections. Section IX entitled “Interventions with families and caregivers in oncology” includes chapters that are specific to couples and caregivers as well as managing family conflicts to provide responsive family care at the end of life. Sections X, XI, and XII are devoted to the diverse needs of families ranging from parental cancers to pediatric oncology to the impact of cancer across the adult life span. The handbook concludes with the well-written section “Building resilience in interprofessional practice,” an essential read to provide psychosocial care with expertise and compassion while working with interprofessional colleagues to strengthen innovative collaborations.

The *Handbook of oncology social work* presents a comprehensive overview of what is currently understood

as the foundation of oncology social work for providing psychosocial care with and for people diagnosed with cancer. This in-depth resource provides a sound framework for reflection and innovation within the dynamic field of providing holistic care that is attentive to the psychosocial needs of people and their families experiencing cancer. The *Handbook of oncology social work: psychosocial care for people with cancer* is a valuable addition to your personal “go-to” oncology library.

In the words of Julia H. Rowland, PhD, Director, Office of Cancer Survivorship, National Cancer Institute, “This long-awaited volume, written by pioneers in the field, provides a wealth of evidence-based information on how to deliver cancer care for the whole person...a must read for anyone practicing in oncology.” (p. v)