
Book Review: Practical Chemotherapy: A Multidisciplinary Guide. Summerhayes and Daniels

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Citation

K Harrington. *Book Review: Practical Chemotherapy: A Multidisciplinary Guide. Summerhayes and Daniels*. The Internet Journal of Otorhinolaryngology. 2005 Volume 4 Number 2.

Abstract

This book represents a series of short monographs on cytotoxic drugs that are commonly used singly or in combination in oncology. The authors are quite clear in their introduction that the text does not provide a comprehensive account of cancer chemotherapy - in the hope that this will avoid disappointment for readers who are looking for such a volume. In essence, they have produced a recipe book of 65 single agent and combination regimens that are widely in use and have supplemented this information with specific advice for prescribers, nurses and pharmacists. As such, this approach allows for rapid access to useful information by each of these groups on most of the commonly used drug cocktails. They are to be congratulated on the fact that the volume includes data on some of the newer agents, such as trastuzumab (Herceptin) and rituximab, that have entered the pharmacopoeia in recent years. In each section there is important information on drug administration and emetogenicity of treatment. There are a number of useful hints for prescribers, nurses and pharmacists that are aimed at avoiding some of the more commonly occurring avoidable complications of cytotoxic drug administration.

The authors have attempted to ensure that the information in

each section is self-contained with minimal requirement for cross-referencing throughout the rest of the book. While this fact may be seen as a specific strength of the text and may make it useful for occasional reference on a specific regimen that is infrequently used, it also leads to extensive repetition of material. To cite just one example of this tendency, the Cockcroft-Gault formula for calculating creatinine clearance is described in 8 separate places in the first 100 pages of the book and this rate of repetition does not slacken in the rest of the text. Indeed, in each of the regimens where a platinum drug is used there is essentially the same page of text to describe the effects of platins on the renal tract and the need for monitoring. This compartmentalisation of the text detracts from the overall effect and gives the book a feeling of a collection of data sheets rather than the multidisciplinary guide book advertised in the title. I fear that by adopting this approach the authors have ensured that this book will largely be consigned to use as a reference manual in cytotoxic pharmacies and on chemotherapy day units. I doubt that this will be seen as an important acquisition for hospital libraries or oncology departments.

References

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