

Valuable insights from a professional who is also a patient living with cancer

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Living with the Long-Term Effects of Cancer: Acknowledging trauma and other emotional challenges

By Cordelia Galgut

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Every 2 minutes, someone living in the UK is diagnosed with cancer, and half of this number of people will survive more than 10 years (Cancer Research UK, 2020). Much work has been done recently around the needs of those living with and beyond cancer, including the introduction of a holistic needs assessment, end-of-treatment plans, and personalised and stratified follow-up (NHS England and NHS Improvement, 2019).

Furthermore, the National Cancer Research Institute (2018) has produced a top 10 of research priorities for patients living with and beyond cancer due to the lack of current research and support available to those who sit in limbo between the support provided during active treatment and that provided within supportive palliative and end-of-life care.

Cordelia Galgut discusses many of these 10 priority areas, including the physical, emotional, social and occupational impacts of cancer and its treatment, and the book includes insights from patients and health professionals. Some of these could be perceived as pejorative to many working in

the field, and this is evidenced by the desire of three professionals to remain anonymous. Another important area that Dr Galgut covers is informed consent, an area that should include information regarding possible long-term effects, as well as the more immediate effects of treatment, which for many does not always occur.

Dr Galgut's book should be a must-read for patients who may be living with the long-term effects of treatment and who may have experienced some of the assumptions and prejudices that Dr Galgut writes about—they will benefit from the feeling of camaraderie that the topics covered in this book provide. This book is also an invaluable resource for health professionals, at any level, due to the plain language and inclusion of multiple resources, references and explanatory notes. That said, and as mentioned previously, it may cause some discomfort for many professionals, which I do not necessarily think is a negative—truth can often be disconcerting.

Another aspect of this book that could be contentious is Dr Galgut's dual perspective and self-disclosure—as a psychologist and as an individual living with the long-term effects of cancer and its treatment. But it is this position that allows her to write with a refreshing and, at times, brutal honesty. Self-disclosure, although common in nursing, can be seen as a grey area (Warrender, 2019).

As someone who shares this dual perspective, it was this that piqued my interest

in the book and the author, and I was not disappointed. I found myself connecting with much of what was written because it was similar to my own experiences, both personally and professionally, both within cancer and within persistent pain. The ability of this book to resonate across specialties means that it will be relevant to a wider demographic than those working within cancer services or affected by cancer and its late effects. This generalisability, I think, lends itself to any area where patients often feel that their experiences/symptoms are not always believed/validated.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in gaining a better understanding of the professional and patient issues regarding a diagnosis of cancer, its treatment and the long-term emotional and physical effects. Furthermore, it would be of interest to anyone who wishes to gain insight into the lived experience of someone with a dual perspective, as both health professional and patient. This is a perspective that Dr Galgut presents beautifully. **BJN**

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