

A Physician's Guide to Pain and Symptom Management in Cancer Patients, 2nd edition

Janet L. Abraham, MD

The subject covered by this book is very important and relevant to all patients, especially cancer patients. As we know, cancer patients have needs and issues, especially social issues, which are different from other patients with acute illnesses. In no other field do physicians have to deal with “the end-of-life issues” and “care of the terminally ill” so soon in their patients’ care and as much as in cancer patients. Moreover, with newer treatments patients are living longer, and pain and symptom management are becoming more complex and important. Often, oncology fellows and attendings are well versed with the management of the cancer part but feel uncomfortable in dealing with these emotional issues and in adequate pain management. These issues are important not only to the patients and their families but also to the physicians involved in their care. There is no one handbook that is concise yet comprehensive that can help the physicians deal with all these issues.

This book is an excellent guide to educate physicians in the complex issues of “end of life,” pain and other symptom management. The text is clear and comprehensive, with adequate examples to explain the topic. The fact that the author provided the important points in table form is very helpful for quick reference.

I think this book is an excellent *handbook* for not only oncology and palliative care physicians but also medicine residents and attendings who end up providing pain and palliative care to the majority of our terminally ill patients.

I highly recommend this hand-

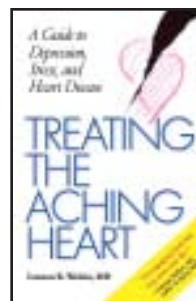
book to all medicine and oncology and palliative care staff.

Treating the Aching Heart: A Guide to Depression, Stress and Heart Disease

Lawson R. Wulsin, MD; Vanderbilt University Press, 2007; ISBN 0826515614; 256 pages; \$22.95

In *Treating the Aching Heart*, author Dr. Wulsin offers a rich diversity of information on depression and how it increases one’s risk for developing or exacerbating heart disease. By offering inspiring stories and simplifying scientific facts, Wilson provides the reader with an important model for improving the functioning of the two most important organs in their body—the heart and brain. Wilson’s prose focuses principally on issues appertaining to what he calls the “grim pairing of depression and heart disease” (p. 3) and how they represent the importance of minimizing depression as a means of decreasing the “risk for developing and dying from coronary disease” (p. 156). Yet, this focus should not obfuscate Wilson’s more fundamental concern, which is to set out a generally applicable methodology that can be used by the average citizen to assess and monitor such risks on an individual level.

To “learn your risk of heart disease” (p. 131) is, according to the author, the responsibility of each and every American. Unfortunately, in the United States where heart attack risk is based “mostly from research on white men” (p. 3), Wilson insists that we must also “learn how heart disease in women, blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans differs from heart disease in white men” (p. 13). Dr. Wilson, for his part, moves beyond traditional beliefs that the heart and brain are distinct, unrelated entities. The cardiovascular system is, according to the



author, “so laced with nerves” (p. 86) and the brain so interconnected with the heart that treating them separately may be “futile” (p. 56). By extensively analyzing recent studies, Wilson detects the resonances of modern cardiovascular and neurological research, thereby providing a nuanced, sophisticated understanding of the role depression plays in heart disease. He packages this information and presents it to the reader with simplicity and detail.

In sum, this book remains important as it contributes well-needed discourse on the nature of depression and, in particular, its role in the development of heart disease, and the effects the two have on non-white, nonmale populations. The relative paucity of research on the aforementioned subjects warrants additional attention since, as Wilson elucidates, such lack of insight has the potential to yield disastrous consequences for clinicians and their patients. Accordingly, *Treating the Aching Heart* should be read not only by physicians interested in the heart and brain, but by anyone with an interest in identifying ways to improve their quality of life while simultaneously reducing their risk for developing heart disease.

Reviewed by
Ribhi Hazin, MD
Cambridge, MA
hazin@fas.harvard.edu