A Memoir and Medical Physics


Radiation therapists care for their patients every day — sometimes working with a particular patient for 6 weeks at a time. Friendships develop, recipes and stories are shared, and hugs are exchanged daily in the life of radiation therapists. But unless a radiation therapist is a cancer survivor, can he or she fully comprehend the depth of a cancer diagnosis? Bow Ties, Butterflies & Band-Aids reveals the author’s personal experience with childhood cancer and her pursuit of survivorship. This memoir vividly describes tribulations that a child must endure, including the effect of a cancer diagnosis on his or her family and friends. Portraying life “turned upside down,” the author recounts what seemed like a normal Friday when she experienced a throbbing stomach ache that led to an emergency department visit, followed by an unexpected cancer diagnosis. The book is divided into 3 sections:

- **The Cancer** – introduces VanDyke’s diagnosis and the ensuing childhood friendship with another cancer patient, from which a deep bond formed through each other’s “horrifying experience.”
- **The Aftermath** – describes a period of remission, finishing high school, and beginning college, followed by a relapse.
- **The Reconstruction** – further describes VanDyke’s struggle as she battled remission and the continued fear of another relapse. Although a deep depression consumed the author throughout college, she forged on with the help of yoga, meditation, and journaling.

The symbolism of the title is evident throughout VanDyke’s journey, from the close bond she formed with her doctor, who greeted her wearing bow ties, to her increasing fear of endless needle sticks. Each chapter launches with italicized text that transcribes the innermost thoughts of the author’s family and friends. Their reflections lend a greater understanding of how family members and friends of cancer patients proceed with their lives. As her mother says in 1 entry, “Nothing goes back to normal once you’ve been diagnosed, so you just develop a new normal.” The incredible strength of her mother held everyone together. Throughout the book, VanDyke shares poignant moments of a mother’s love that will reach deep into the hearts of anyone who has cared for a loved one.

VanDyke describes her radiation therapy experience as a “mixed bag of easy, comfortable, and embarrassing.” The embarrassing part was removing her training bra for simulation and the naked torso photos that followed. As she eloquently explains, “Radiation didn’t cut. It
didn’t make me sick.” She also notes, “Radiation therapy in my case was no big deal.”

Bow Ties, Butterflies & Band-Aids will help those with a cancer diagnosis steer through the endless doctor visits and worry, and help radiation therapists better understand their patients’ experiences. It will bring laughter, tears, and a profound feeling of compassion and empathy for loved ones or patients.

This memoir is a great educational addition to a radiation therapy curriculum saturated with science, math courses, and technology-driven clinical rotations. Radiation therapy programs are committed to producing compassionate and caring radiation therapists; embedding this book in curricula is a key strategy toward achieving that goal.

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Stem cell labeling is a fascinating field of intensifying discovery and research. Stem Cell Labeling for Delivery and Tracking Using Noninvasive Imaging is part of a series that targets medical physicists in physical science, engineering, and mathematics in medicine and clinical research.

The objective of the series, and this book, is to contribute to the advancement of medical physics — particularly in developing countries. In addition to explaining the potential use of stem cells, the book addresses stem cell labeling and tracking using noninvasive imaging such as positron emission tomography, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging, and ultrasonography. The book outlines the research involved in using noninvasive imaging and tracers for stem cell use and labeling, as well as the role of these imaging modalities in drug and pharmacology research.

Rapidly evolving radiologic and radiation therapy technology has given rise to new developments in stem cell tracking and labeling that are discussed in the text. However, the majority of the information is based on preclinical data that primarily targets cardiology rather than oncology. The studies reviewed in the text mainly involve cardiovascular abnormalities. Discussions include the multiple imaging modalities and dyes used in tracking stem cells and explanations of how they restore impaired body tissues. Because most of the information revolves around cardiovascular disease, the information would be new to most therapists but may be of little value. However, 1 chapter about the role of mesenchymal cells in bone marrow transplantations may be helpful to radiation therapists. Another chapter dedicated to the interaction and production of radiographs, CT, and fluoroscopy is a good review for the seasoned therapist, but it may be out of place in this book given its topic and target audience.

As a radiation therapist, I found the book difficult to follow. Multiple abbreviations throughout the text were distracting and interrupted the flow. The book size, type size, number of pages, and quality of paper are appropriate. The book contains mostly black-and-white figures of poor quality, but the pages in the center display exceptional color figures and illustrations that add value and clarify data. Other positive attributes include an introduction that describes the rationale for stem cell labeling and tracking; summaries at the beginning and end of each chapter; and reference lists at the end of each chapter.

In conclusion, Stem Cell Labeling for Delivery and Tracking Using Noninvasive Imaging is more suited for those interested in stem cell therapy research and would be of little value to radiation therapists.

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