

Spotlight

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Life

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Father turns journal entries on child's cancer into life-affirming book of hope

Patricia Nicholson

Syd Birrell became an author under the most unenviable conditions: during his young son James' five-year battle with neuroblastoma.

The resulting book, *Ya Can't Let Cancer Ruin Your Day: The James E-mails*, is a compendium of the journal entries that Birrell e-mailed to friends and relatives to keep them apprised of James's condition.

These missives began as health updates, but evolved into life updates that celebrated the family's determination to enjoy the time they had with James.

Ya Can't Let Cancer Ruin Your Day was published three years after James died at the age of eight.

It chronicles adventures on which the family embarked with James during his illness, from having dinner atop the CN Tower to sharing an enthusiasm for space flight with actor Tom Hanks, who wrote a foreword to the book.

The book was made possible by funding from MDS Nordion, which supplied some of the drugs James required during his illness.

It is available through www.greentrainbooks.com, at Indigo stores and through Indigo's Web site (www.indigo.ca).

Diagnosis and decision-making

A cancer diagnosis can make a patient feel lost and overwhelmed. The British Columbia/Yukon chapter of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF) now offers a map to help women newly diagnosed with breast cancer navigate their way through treatment and recovery.

The illustrated Navigation Map provides information about the key steps patients will face, from diagnosis through treatment and recovery. It is part of an information kit available to newly diagnosed breast cancer patients in British Columbia.

The CBCF's 2002 study, *Uncovering the Gaps: An inquiry of breast care in British Columbia*, identified a clear need for tools to help women cope with diagnosis and decision-making. The Navigation Map was designed by a team that included breast cancer survivors, surgeons, oncologists and representatives from the B.C. Cancer Agency and the Alliance for Breast Cancer Information and Support of B.C. & Yukon.

The map marks major decision points, such as surgery, treatment options and follow-up, with descriptions of the major choices and possible outcomes at each of these junctures.

There is also a suggested reading list, organized under headings that match the major points on the navigation map. For each stage, there are recommended selections from the book *The Intelligent Patient Guide to Breast Cancer: All You Need to Know to Take an Active Part in Your Treatment*, and the booklet *After Breast Cancer Treatment. What Next? An Awareness Guide*.

Both publications are in the patient information kit, and are also available in bookstores.

Information kits are available free through the Canadian Cancer Society at 1-888-939-3333. The Navigation Map is also available CBCF at 1-800-561-6111, or can be downloaded from www.cbcbf.org.

Weighty issue of pregnancy

Brette Sember, co-author of *Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-figured Expectant Mom*, would like to reassure women in the size 14 and above size range that they can have healthy pregnancies, despite reports of the dangers of being pregnant and overweight.

Sember, who is a plus-size mom, wrote the book with Dr. Bruce Rodgers, associate professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and director of maternal-fetal medicine and fetal cardiovascular medicine at the Children's Hospital of Buffalo, in Buffalo, N.Y.

The book includes chapters on weight during pregnancy, maternity clothes, labour and delivery, and working with your health-care provider.

More information and an online support group for plus-size moms, is available at www.YourPlusSizePregnancy.com.

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Events and Reports



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