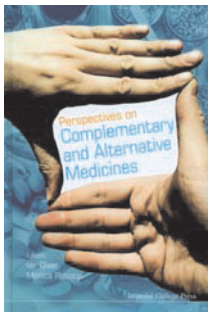
Book review

Cancer care engages with CAM

Perspectives on complementary and alternative medicines. Ian N Olver, Monica Robotin, editors. London: Imperial College Press, 2012 (487 pp, $168.95). ISBN 9781848165564.



ALTHOUGH THIS compendium cannot possibly encompass the depth and breadth of complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs) as they are practised today, it does provide an array of interesting insights into what is a relatively uncharted field within the "modern occidental" medical community.

Aligned with the background of the editors — Ian Olver and Monica Robotin — from the Cancer Council Australia, *Perspectives* has a clear focus on oncology. Many of the authors do not come from a specific cancer-related professional background, but rather are of a wide variety of expertise with varied levels of research and clinical backgrounds. The topics presented are diverse; from regulatory aspects of CAMs and CAM practice, to the use of meditation, and a chapter on spirituality and prayer. The style, depth and breadth of the subject covered also vary between chapters, from rather brief introductions, to full-scale scientific assessments of CAMs' validity and relevance within the framework of occidental medical practice. Appropriately, the book contains sections questioning the scientific support of some CAMs, while also advising of the potential adverse effects of CAMs and their interactions with conventional prescription medicines, imperative knowledge for all medical practitioners.

The text is not so basic as to appeal to the general public, but rather can be seen as a guide for conventional medical practitioners, academics, medical students and health professionals who wish to expand their knowledge and get a feel for the differing views on CAMs that exist. This publication is most apt for those with a special interest in oncology, such as oncologists and oncology nurses.

Though the extent to which different CAMs are presented in this book would not be sufficient to propel physicians to confidently provide advice on or prescribe CAMs, it is an easy read and replete with generally well-thought-out perspectives of CAMs from experts and enthusiasts from different disciplines, inviting readers to explore the possibility of expanding occidental medical practice beyond the current norm.

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doi: 10.5694/mja12.11343

Poem

Angiocrine factors: reasons for and against the quitting of smoking

"This regeneration process also restores the physiological respiratory function of the lungs, which is mediated by amplification of various epithelial progenitor cells and regeneration of the alveolar sacs"

— Dr Bi-Sen Ding, Cornell University[1]

Visitation resumes first with the most ardent
ornithologists. Loony they pierce, stride right on in, primed
by the song of ocular gadgets
to a once-blighted habitat that's chalked up
its comeback to a mad cheeping action
poker-faced finches
go expensively berserk in
for twins, those part-refurbished casinos

Then as fireweed spreads, archaeologists
unpack, puncturing tedious theories that race
to hypothesised town
for reasonable milk and sachets of revegetation
Intently. Alveoli. And with a quiver
of toothbrushes they'll catalogue footprints
sketch evidence of campfires, and further their cherries
lit assumptions of civics

Ethics an ecotourist hocks up is next
to assume its diaphragm's welcome
in zones where squeezing flamingos
is classified. And pinkish, the air
a collapsible shovel
digs mating calls with grins and a crossbow
set to release in folds of waterproof rain
that properly breathes and leaves them breathless

Lastly, front handsprings of condo developers bounce in
casing out the joint, thinning hints, flipping birds
until planting stakes with red flags
appraises this opportunity theirs
like a gymnast nailing her landing
in the Olympic floor exercise. And eventually children
of divorcees with biblical names follow in
downstairs. A new retro cafe named Obadiah's will appear and trade
in shortbread, baked with an absolute Christload

… of butter

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doi: 10.5694/mja12.11189

1 EurekAlert! Lung regeneration closer to reality with new discovery by Weill Cornell Medical College researchers [media release]. 28 Oct 2011. http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2011-10/nyph-lrc102811.php (accessed Sep 2012). ❑