

Preface

Cancer and aging are integrally related. Cancer incidence and mortality increase with age, with most cancer diagnoses and deaths occurring in patients aged 65 and older. The aging of the Baby Boomer population, along with an overall increase in life expectancy, points to a doubling of the U.S. population over age 65 by the year 2030. This demographic shift, combined with the known association of cancer and aging, is expected to bring about a rapid growth in the older cancer-patient population. It is clear that geriatric principles must become part of oncology care.

The evaluation and development of treatment recommendations for an older adult with cancer can be challenging for many reasons. Tumor biology and response to therapy are affected by age. In addition, age-related factors may impact treatment patterns, tolerance, and efficacy. These age-related factors include functional status declines, comorbid conditions, changes in cognitive function, weakening of organ function, decreases in physiologic reserve, and faltering social support. In addition, preferences and desires for therapy can be influenced by a person's life expectancy. Palliative care considerations and family caregiver needs may also need to be an integral part of decisions involving cancer therapy. Another important aspect of managing cancer in older individuals includes the goals of treatment. While cure and prolongation of survival are the main goals of cancer treatment for patients of all ages, the prolongation of active life expectancy is particularly

relevant to the older patient, especially individuals receiving adjuvant treatment for cancer. Given the complex interweaving of these factors, oncologists should be armed with tools that help them to comprehensively evaluate older adults in order to provide thoughtful, timely, and effective treatment recommendations.

This book is designed to guide oncologists with the integration of proven geriatric principles. Recommendations, risks, and benefits of cancer screening, assessment, and treatment of older adults with cancer are discussed in detail. Chapters detail the physiologic, psychological, and social aspects of aging and discuss ways to incorporate this information into cancer therapy decisions with older adults. Palliative care considerations in the challenging context of aging are also discussed, along with the issues that caregivers face when dealing with a geriatric cancer patient. An understanding of the unique interaction between cancer and aging will ultimately enhance cancer care for the growing population of older adults.

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