



The Year My Mother Was Bald

	<p>Author: Ann Speltz Publisher: Magination Press ISBN: 1-55798-888-9</p> <p>OncoLinkRating:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">☆☆</p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>
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The Year My Mother Was Bald was written to emphasize the effect that a diagnosis of cancer can have on the patient's child. This is an important aspect to touch upon, as many children will experience this very situation. In these cases, not only is the physical health of the patient at risk, but also the emotional and social well being of the entire family. This book attempts to identify with the child experiencing her mother being diagnosed and treated for breast cancer, and the various steps and consequences that go hand-in-hand with an extensive modern treatment course.

The book was written by Ann Speltz, a PhD in English, who completed her breast cancer treatment in 1998. She has then founded Kid Support, an organization that establishes peer support groups for children of cancer patients. *The Year My Mother Was Bald* is written for other children to read, from the point of view of the daughter of the patient. Immediately, children would be able to identify with "the author" as a normal American daughter who goes to the beach on weekends, whose best friend is her family dog, and who has career aspirations but is still stuck in school. However, her life is drastically changed when her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. This book does an excellent job of describing the range of emotions common to many children in this situation. First, there is fear and uncertainty, as the person who represents strength in the child's life becomes ill. It touches on this concern for her mother as well as the fear of being alone and not cared for if something were to happen to her. The book then takes us on the journey through the entire treatment of breast cancer; from surgery to chemotherapy to radiation therapy. Along the way, it describes the emotions of the daughter from the need for normalcy to the guilt of thinking that she somehow caused her mother's illness to isolation and finally responsibility and a new-found closeness within the family.

The Year My Mother Was Bald would be an excellent resource for children whose parents are being treated for cancer. It not only describes the process of cancer treatment, but also accurately describes the emotions of a child in these circumstances. It appropriately touches on the positive aspects of the process, but only briefly flirts with the idea that things could be much worse than what happened in the actual story. There is minimal reference to the depression and anxiety that the mother feels and perhaps paints too "rosy" of a picture, as everything turns out perfectly in the end, with absolutely no difficulties. Again, however, this is likely what children with parents being treated for cancer need to hear (or read).

The book is appropriate, not only for children, but also for the parents as well. There are hints throughout the book for how parents should interact with and reassure their children in this stressful time. Therefore, it could be beneficial for adults as well. In addition, there are "Kids Science News" sections, which attempt to describe oncologic principles in a way children could understand. These are helpful as well, though these sections as well as the tone and vocabulary of the book would likely best serve someone who is in the 10-14 age group. As a resource for children this age, *The Year My Mother Was Bald* is highly recommended.

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