

# FOREWORD

**T**his remarkable and informative book blends the perspectives of patients with breast cancer and the physicians who treat them. In contrast to many other diseases affecting women, breast cancer requires treatment decisions that involve not only the physical malady but the quality of life as well. These quality-of-life issues are influenced by familial, social, cultural, emotional, and spiritual variables that are very personal and unique to each woman. In view of this, medical and surgical decisions must integrate the perspectives of both the patient and her physicians. Thus listening skills, empathy, sensitivity, and a willingness to accept the patient as a partner in treatment planning are a must for physicians. The patient, in turn, needs to be familiar with medical terminology and be well informed about treatment options and their potential impact on her life, both physically and emotionally. The bottom line in the decision-making process is this: do the benefits outweigh the risks for a given combination and sequence of treatments after taking into account all the available options?

This invaluable book should be read by every physician who sees women with breast diseases. It provides unique and valuable insights into women's perspectives about breast cancer, including their fears, emotional needs, and desire for the information that is critical to assuming a responsible decision-making role in their own treatment and rehabilitation. Every woman who has breast disease or who is at risk for developing breast cancer will benefit greatly by reading this informative and well-illustrated book. The voices of women and their loved ones that permeate these pages will help others face the trauma associated with this disease and cope with the decisions that must be made knowing that they do not face this crisis alone. These pages offer a woman a better understanding of the complex choices she faces and thus reduce her anxieties. She can also learn about the option of

breast reconstruction, the different operations available for breast restoration, and the associated risks and benefits. Such a factual, realistic, and no-nonsense information base is the best way to deal with these issues, for it allows a woman to act knowledgeably in selecting her physicians and in making the treatment decisions that are right for her.

I want to compliment Karen Berger and John Bostwick on their significant and unique contribution to the literature. Karen Berger is a leading medical publisher and writer who has devoted years to working with women with breast cancer. This book reflects her desire “to educate women about the treatment alternatives available to them so that they can more effectively influence their own destinies and play an active role in their own health care.” Dr. John Bostwick is one of the foremost breast reconstructive surgeons whose extensive experience working with breast cancer patients is well known. His care and compassion for patients are evident throughout this book. These authors have written a meaningful and easily understood text to help women deal with the fear and reality of breast cancer by enabling them to become informed participants in the treatment-planning process. They have succeeded admirably. This book will enhance the understanding and trust between those who are afflicted with breast diseases and those who care for them.

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