

# Foreword

When you hear that you have cancer, your world starts spinning, not for a moment or two, but for what feels like an eternity. Then in a short time, it often comes crashing down around you, as well as upon those who love you and care for you, leaving you depressed, frightened, and in deep anguish. The questions are almost always the same. How do I deal with this? Will I see my kids grow up? Will I live long enough to see my daughter get married? Will my grandchildren ever know me? Or if it is your child who has cancer, the first response is “NOT MY CHILD!” Then after a bit, more questions come. Children don’t get thyroid cancer, do they? What did I do *wrong*?

I have told hundreds of patients the same thing at this moment: “live one day at a time. If it’s a good day, don’t ruin it with anxiety about the future or regrets about the past. To the extent that you can, let the sun shine in today.” After you think about this for more than a heart beat the question is always, “how do I deal with this bad news right now?” The answer is astonishingly simple for most people. You need reliable information about your problem. This is not to mean a pat on the head and the trite words, “Don’t worry, this is a good cancer.” It always breaks my heart to hear this. There is no good cancer—at least not according to any patient or family that I ever met. If it’s your cancer, how on earth could it be “good”?

It became clear to me early in my career that long explanations in the office usually don’t penetrate the wall of fear and anxiety and often go unheard by even the most sophisticated patients when the subject is their life and the words “thyroid cancer” come into the conversation. Many times I have had to give a person the bad news that the fine-needle aspiration results show thyroid cancer. Then, after answering a barrage of questions as clearly as I know how to do, the patient often leaves the office shook up and looking stunned. An hour later I get a call from the patient with the following question, “But Doc, do I have *cancer*? It’s OK, you can tell me straight out, I want to know.” It usually takes several visits to communicate this information in a way that makes sense to the patient. Even so, this is often less than satisfactory. It takes time to absorb all the information that you need to care for yourself, and unfortunately the particulars of this subject are rife with misinformation.

This book is long overdue. It will provide thyroid cancer patients with a strong set of tools: information from experts, access to Web sites, books, and