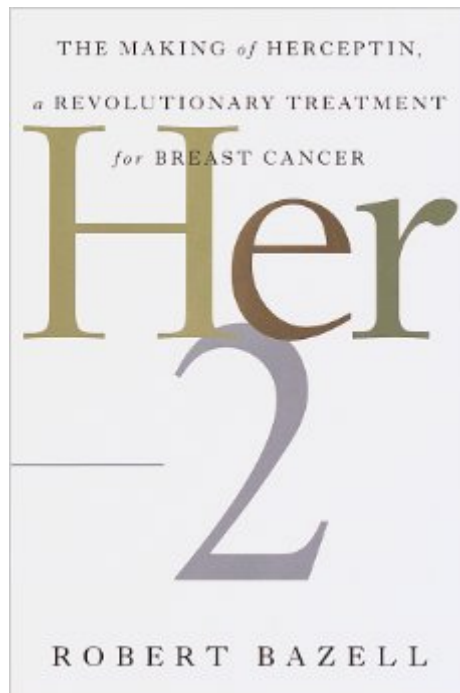


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Her-2: The Making Of Herceptin, A Revolutionary Treatment For Breast Cancer



Synopsis

Two years after she underwent a mastectomy and chemotherapy, Barbara Bradfield's aggressive breast cancer had recurred and spread to her lungs. The outlook was grim. Then she took part in Genentech's clinical trials for a new drug. Five years later she remains cancer-free.

Her-2 is the biography of Herceptin, the drug that provoked dramatic responses in Barbara Bradfield and other women in the trials and that offers promise for hundreds of thousands of breast cancer patients. Unlike chemotherapy or radiation, Herceptin has no disabling side effects. It works by inactivating Her-2/neu--a protein that makes cancer cells grow especially quickly-- produced by a gene found in 25 to 30 percent of all breast tumors. Herceptin caused some patients' cancers to disappear completely; in others, it slowed the progression of the disease and gave the women months or years they wouldn't otherwise have had. Herceptin is the first treatment targeted at a gene defect that gives rise to cancer. It marks the beginning of a new era of treatment for all kinds of cancers.

Robert Bazell presents a riveting account of how Herceptin was born. Her-2 is a story of dramatic discoveries and strong personalities, showing the combination of scientific investigation, money, politics, ego, corporate decisions, patient activism, and luck involved in moving this groundbreaking drug from the lab to a patient's bedside. Bazell's deft portraits introduce us to the remarkable people instrumental in Herceptin's history, including Dr. Dennis Slamon, the driven UCLA oncologist who played the primary role in developing the treatment; Lily Tartikoff, wife of television executive Brandon Tartikoff, who tapped into Hollywood money and glamour to help fund Slamon's research; and Marti Nelson, who inspired the activists who lobbied for a "compassionate use" program that would allow women outside the clinical trials to have access to the limited supplies of Herceptin prior to FDA approval of the drug. And throughout there are the stories of the heroic women with advanced breast cancer who volunteered for the trials, risking what time they had left on an unproven treatment. Meticulously researched, written with clarity and compassion, Her-2 is masterly reporting on cutting-edge science.

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Customer Reviews

I had to read this book for my Biotechnology class and although I am close to failing it I found Her-2 to be pretty exciting book. Her-2 by Bazell and King is about breast cancer, however, it reveals many other interesting things about the drug industry and how progress is made in the medical research field. There are different stories and view points and the authors have successfully managed to combine all this into a book that both teaches and thrills us. I recommend this book to everyone who wants to learn more about breast cancer and about the insights of creating and bringing to the market a revolutionary drug - from selection of the trial patients to the President's office.

I cried and rejoiced all through this book, which I finished today. I knew very little about my condition, which is Her2neu +3 positivity, the highest level of Her2, until I read it. My first oncologist wanted to keep me in the dark, and if it weren't for folks like Mr. Bazzell, I would still be in the dark. I now have the ammunition I need to be more active in my treatment options. I also am so thankful to read about the discovery of this oncogene, and cannot express adequately enough my gratitude to one of the main subjects of this book, Dennis Salmon, for his dedication to the discovery of Her2 and all he has done to get the drug, Herceptin on the market. Anyone who overexpresses Her2neu must have this book. This breast cancer is phenomenally deadly, and more able to recur and can spread like wildfire, even during chemotherapy and radiation, so thank goodness now I know, from reading this, what can happen, and what needs to be done.

Bazell uncovers emotions and stories from patients, advocates/lobbyists, scientists and family members. It is a very moving story -- be sure to have tissues nearby as you read through the Phase I trials. It could be more well-rounded and present ideas from Genentech's viewpoint as well, and it does end faster than it should. If Bazell or anyone tackles an epilogue to Her-2, I would be the first in line to buy it. Kudos. A must read for ALL WOMEN.

I wish I had read this book last year. I ordered while my sister was being treated with Herceptin for a recurrence of breast cancer. Unfortunately, she died before I could get the book. This book gives real insight into the politics of cancer treatment - the passiveness of some oncologists, how an executive's own personal experience with a disease can determine if drug development will go forward or not, and how women are becoming more aggressive in monitoring their own treatment. Bazell talks about the frustrations of critically ill and dying women in trying to work through the medical, academic and managed care maze to get the treatment they need. This drug has been the 'magic bullet' for many women. It has been called the start of a new era in disease treatment. It is essential for anyone involved in this disease to read this book, to understand what they are up against and how they can help themselves.

This is the thinking woman's cancer book. If you are a science buff, cancer pioneer or a woman who wants to know what really happens in the world of science and drug revolutions, read this book. It's well written, bitter-sweet and manages to be simultaneously scientific and humanistic.

My wife has been receiving weekly doses of Herceptin for a year now. A fascinating story of how this miracle drug came to be. Reading about how Herceptin grew from a theory to reality, how the marketplace influenced development and the personalities of the people involved made this a real page turner, I couldn't put it down!

This book gave new light and explored old beliefs about breast cancer. I have never been so impressed by the intellect of such a powerful author as Robert Bazell. Every part of the Her-2 interested me and each page left me completely speechless. I would recommend this book everyone willing to explore the idea of an outstandingly fascinating book.

Very interesting to read since I am now using this miracle drug for a recent diagnosis. I was surprised to see it was published so long ago (1998) and I'd love it to be updated. The personal stories of the women who fought for this drug, and those who didn't get to benefit from it, are the most compelling. I am so grateful to benefit from all the pioneering work that's been done. So why does this still cost \$10,000.00 for each infusion 16 years later? I'm getting it for a year, maybe \$180,000.00, nearly all covered by insurance. An update on the costs of developing, marketing, and distributing the drug would be helpful.

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