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Lupus: Living With It - book description and selected reviews

Suzy Szasz Palmer

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/suzy_szasz_palmer/3/
Since she was 13, Szasz, a librarian, now 34, has except for occasional remissions suffered from lupus, a chronic autoimmune disease. Here, she shows that by managing her ailment she has assumed responsibility for her life. Although this inspiring narrative inevitably concerns the medical crises and treatments the author underwent--often at odds with physicians--Szasz is justifiably proud of earning honors in high school, college and graduate school. Though driven to contemplate suicide by physical setbacks and the breakup of a love affair, she has always rallied, thanks to her fervent belief in "always having occasions and goals ahead of me."

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Szasz, an academic reference librarian, has written a mesmerizing account of her life as a sufferer of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, or lupus. She offers it as a counterpoint to accounts of people who have overcome medical or psychological tragedies and have returned to normal health. Szasz's life stopped being normal with her diagnosis at age 13. She will always be sick. She shares what she has learned in her 20 years as a chronically ill person: become as educated about the condition and its treatment as possible; choose doctors carefully and work with them, not against them; remain as independent as you possibly can; understand and be prepared for the financial battles; keep your mind active; and do as much as you can. One is impressed throughout the book with Szasz's intelligence, her willpower, and her joy in life's pleasures. "Life really is a crapshoot," she writes, and it is clear that Szasz has made the most of what she was thrown. Highly recommended for popular health collections.

- Barbara Keen, Spokane Community Coll. Lib., Wash.

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**Doody's Review Service**

**Description:** This book provides a patient's look at systemic lupus erythematosus in the form of an autobiographical journey that includes a struggle with both the chronic and life-threatening features of the disease.

**Purpose:** The author wishes to encourage other patients with this serious illness to take control of their lives and reach their full human potential.

**Audience:** The book will prove useful not only for lupus patients but all those with chronic illnesses, their families and friends. Health professionals stand to learn much about dealing with intelligent patients and everyone will gain from the sensitive insights provided into the father-daughter relationship.

**Features:** The book is written in a clear and enjoyable style that will be appealing to its diverse audience. There are lucid explanations of the medical aspects of lupus and practical advice on issues such as health insurance. Physicians can be confident in recommending this book to their patients with lupus. The author enriches her readers by introducing them to Flannery O'Connor, one of the most important American Catholic literary figures of the 20th century. Relevant to this book, Ms. O'Connor lived and eventually died with lupus at the young age of 39. The author expresses the hope that she can achieve what has been ascribed to O'Connor by one of her critics: "She lived with it (lupus) in such a way that she enabled people to forget about it entirely."

**Assessment:** Flannery O'Connor's medium was raw fiction. Suzy Szasz uses autobiography as an equally effective literary tool to reach out directly to patients with lupus and their allies. That audience will find they are well served by her efforts.

**Reviewer:** Prerana Panchal, MD (Loyola University Medical Center) ~ 5 Stars! from Doody