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Cancer on \$5 a Day (*chemo not included): How Humor Got Me Through the Toughest Journey of My Life

BY KATHY LATOUR

I hadn't heard of comedian Robert Schimmel when I received his book for review, but I hope most of you will know his name soon, because if you like to laugh, this is the book to read. Well, let me amend that statement: If you like to laugh at cancer and you don't mind what my mother would have called "potty mouth" and references to genitalia and sex acts, then this is the book to read.

Cancer humor is hard to pull off, but when someone can do it, it's wonderful. Because if you're laughing, it's a few seconds when whatever the real world is throwing at you has to take a back seat. Schimmel turned a first chemo session into a hilarious introduction to the cranky guy in the chair next to him, and had me loving both of them in an instant.

Schimmel is funny in a wonderfully irreverent way about something anyone can identify with—a complete loss of control. Indeed, Schimmel was finally on a straight shot to fame and fortune in 2000 when he got the news that he had stage 3 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma at age 50. But instead of getting grumpy, Schimmel turned to his life's elixir—humor. He decided it was his job to make everyone around him laugh, which, when you think about it, means an audience of oncology types and other people with cancer who are grumpy.

I liked Schimmel's book because it made me laugh out loud, but after I read the book's introduction, I also found myself liking the man. Professional comedians find humor in life and work it as a profession. After Schimmel finished treatment and returned to the stage, he didn't leave behind his experience—he took it with him, drawing cancer survivors and caregivers to his shows. I honor anyone who will stand in front of a Las Vegas audience and talk about going through cancer. Schimmel is advancing cancer education as well as finding ways to make a horrific experience something to laugh about.