

the information to come while reviewing what has been covered already so as to nicely integrate the goal of the book in an informative and educational way. Overall, the book effectively presents the scientific literature in combination with real-life stories, leaving the reader eager to integrate this newfound knowledge to better the lives of those suffering from cancer and its related diseases.

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Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness. By Susannah Cahalan. New York: Free Press; 2012. 288 p. US \$25.00 (Hardcover). ISBN: 978-1611749786.

Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness is the story of a woman who went insane, the doctors who misdiagnosed her, the family who supported her, the boyfriend who loved her, and the miraculous recovery she made thanks to one physician-hero.

Susannah Cahalan is our protagonist. She's an attractive 24-year-old reporter for the *New York Post* who develops a rare neurological disorder, in which — for no apparent reason — an assassin group of inflammatory cells infiltrates her brain and liquefies those centers responsible for personality, memory, and cognition. With the executive function areas of her cortex melted, Cahalan comes progressively unhinged, until finally, she is entirely given over to paranoid delusions, hallucinations, and manic hysteria.

In telling this story — of her sickness, deterioration, and eventual recovery — Cahalan faces the significant obstacle that none of her memories of the experience are reliable, since she was, at the time, psychotic. Therefore, she is obliged to piece the narrative together from a hodgepodge of available sources: medical records, surveillance videos, the testimony of friends and family, and the diary she kept during the ordeal. What she presents is a thoroughly researched account, more redolent of investigatory journalism than of memoir. Consequently, the final product reads like an extended newspaper article.

The writing is clean and neat. Sentences are simple, tidy, and polished. To her credit, Cahalan avoids committing the cardinal sin of many pop-science books of this sort, namely drowning the reader in a sea of extraneous-to-the-story, tangentially related medical trivia, which typically distracts focus from the narrative and usually misrepresents the science.

All this is not to say that the account Cahalan presents is superficial, dry, or stilted. Her prose is warm, generally amiable, and even endowed with a fair amount of casual vulgarity. The effect is to lend the text a friendly air of familiarity, similar to the comfort found in a conversation or in girlfriend gab. As a fun, friendly story, Cahalan's book is therefore a success. It's a bizarre story (dotted with a few clichéd jabs at busy doctors) from which the reader can draw his own conclusions. If you want answers, you'll be disappointed. Still, it's entertaining.

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Practical Bioinformatics. By Michael Agostino. New York: Garland Science; 2013. 367 p. US \$70.00 (Paperback). ISBN: 978-081534456-8.

Navigating through online sequencing databases today can be exhausting. When a biologist has a specific DNA, RNA, or protein sequence, how can he or she know which database will be most helpful in answering research questions when there are so many available? Furthermore, with such extensive online resources, how can a scientist use each database to its full potential by optimizing the settings and thoroughly analyzing the results? It is easy for one to use powerful analysis software but have little comprehension of how the program works and how to sufficiently analyze the output, which can lead any researcher to critical errors. *Practical Bioinformatics* was written with these issues and questions in mind, for the biologist with little to no sequence analysis experience.