

FOREWORD

There is little doubt that hepatocellular carcinoma is the new frontier in hepatology. It is a disease of global significance with a devastatingly poor prognosis and is characterized by modest therapeutic advances in the past 20 years. Much more needs to be achieved in coming years if the burden of this disease is to be reduced.

Liver cancer is an underappreciated cause of mortality on a global scale. Most hepatocellular carcinoma occurs in patients with already established liver disease. It is not surprising that there is marked regional variation in the burden of liver cancer given the geographical variation in the prevalence of liver disease, particularly viral hepatitis. Advances in the prevention and therapy of chronic viral hepatitis should have impact on the incidence of liver cancer - if these advances can be delivered to regions of greatest need. The emergence of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease as an important contributor to the incidence of liver cancer is concerning, considering the scale of the modern obesity epidemic. It is overrepresented as an underlying cause in Europe, Australasia, and high-income North America - thus illustrating the ongoing need for public health and policy interventions to target those at risk.

In this context, it is important that emerging knowledge in the field of hepatocellular carcinoma is consolidated, such that scientists and clinicians are provided with an up-to-date overview of important, evolving themes. This book is a very important contribution, in part because it draws further attention to the need for much more work in the field. Early chapters on the cellular origin of hepatocellular carcinoma and the tumor microenvironment reflect the unique pathogenesis of this malignancy and the complex array of cellular forces driving malignant change. *In vitro* mouse models of hepatocellular carcinoma allow those factors to be dissected out and studied in great detail. The diagnosis and management of liver cancer will, for the foreseeable future, be based on multidisciplinary input, using the experience of physicians, surgeons, and radiologists. It is therefore appropriate that the latter chapters of this book discuss contemporary issues in the care of affected patients and the need for individualized decision-making, based on the characteristics of the tumor and the patient, including the features of the underlying liver disease.

This book is a very important read for those involved in basic and translational research, as well as for clinicians delivering care to affected patients. The editor and the authors are to be congratulated on their work.

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