
Preface

Finding a cure for melanoma will be dependent on a greater understanding of the complex molecular interactions that begin in the skin, prior to melanoma's ruthless spread and distribution at distant metastatic sites. Melanoma is one of the most virulent forms of cancer that is now at epidemic proportions worldwide. It is increasingly responsible for deaths and loss of livelihood for countless individuals in their second, third, or fourth decades. With the completion of the sequencing of the 3.1 billion nucleotides that comprise the Human Genome Project, it is now possible to intensify efforts at deciphering the biochemical cascade of events in melanoma, beginning with the relevant genes and the proteins they encode. One of the main challenges is not only to come to grips with the rapid pace of technological advances, but to integrate the new tools of modern genomics with a sound biological perspective that has clinical relevance.

The aim of *Melanoma Techniques and Protocols: Molecular Diagnosis, Treatment, and Monitoring* a volume in the *Methods in Molecular Medicine*TM series, is to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date summary of the most important advances in the field pertaining to melanoma. Each author was instructed to provide clear-cut experimental protocols (including detailed "Notes" on points that often are not spelled out in regular publications), to ensure that investigators outside the field could successfully use these techniques in their own laboratories. As can be appreciated by surveying the table of contents, a highly diverse group of authors were enlisted to provide expert reviews in their respective areas including perspectives in clinical medicine, molecular biology, tumor immunology, and pathology. Authors who could write from first-hand experience were selected to ensure that relevant expertise and direct knowledge of the technique and literature were presented for the reader.

This book is divided into four major categories including: Biology, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Monitoring of Patients with Melanoma. For each category, "cutting-edge" techniques are presented, and discussed within a biological context so that the complexities of melanoma may be better understood by each reader who completes the entire book. Though it is true that only modest clinical improvements have been made for melanoma patients, despite the exhilarating progress in the dissection of many molecular mysteries, it is hoped that this book will be seen as providing forward-thinking perspectives and experimental pro-

TOCOLS designed to help ensure more rapid clinical breakthroughs. Coupling technology to biology at the molecular level should provide a sound basis for progress, and hope to both patients and investigators grappling with this disease.

I would like to express my gratitude to all of the authors who contributed chapters to this book, and to Professor John Walker for his editorial assistance. This book is dedicated to my wife, Debra, and our daughters, Megan and Kelly.

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