

# PREFACE

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The practice of medical oncology is in a period of significant positive change that owes primarily to advances in the basic science of oncology. In recent years, developments in molecular biology techniques have substantially increased our ability to detect and characterize genetic defects in human cells, resulting in significant increases in our understanding of the normal molecular mechanisms controlling cellular proliferation and differentiation. The advancement of our comprehension of these basic molecular mechanisms has been paralleled by comparable increases in our understanding of the molecular basis of the processes involved in neoplastic transformation and tumorigenesis. Information gleaned from studies conducted in basic molecular research laboratories is being applied with unprecedented speed to the development of new molecular tests for cancer diagnosis and prediction of clinical outcome, as well as to the development of new strategies for cancer prevention and treatment. Basic scientists, clinical scientists, and physicians have a need for a source of information on the current state of the art of the molecular biology of human neoplastic diseases. In this volume on *The Molecular Basis of Human Cancer* we attempt to provide such a source of current information, as well as provide a look to the

future of the discipline and the potential impact of scientific advances on the practice of medical oncology. This book is directed primarily to advanced graduate students and medical students, postdoctoral trainees, and established investigators having basic research interests in the molecular basis of human neoplastic disease. However, it is also well suited for the non-expert with similar interests because it provides a broad overview of general themes in the molecular biology of cancer. To be sure, our understanding of the many processes of neoplasia and their molecular basis is far from complete, but few areas of thematic or conceptual consensus have developed. We have made an effort to integrate accepted principles with broader theoretic concepts in an attempt to present a current and comprehensive view of the molecular basis of human cancer. We hope that *The Molecular Basis of Human Cancer* will accomplish its purpose of providing students and researchers who already possess strong but diverse basic science backgrounds with unifying concepts, so as to stimulate new research aimed at furthering our understanding of neoplastic disease.

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