

Preface

In 2014, urothelial carcinoma of the bladder (UCB) is the fifth most common malignancy and the ninth most common cause of cancer death in the United States [1]. Conversely, upper tract urothelial carcinoma (UTUC) accounts for only 5–10% of all urothelial carcinomas. Largely due to the relative preponderance of UCB, much of the clinical decision-making surrounding UTUC is extrapolated from evidence that is based on UCB patients [2]. In fact, a recent review found 238 randomized controlled trials in bladder cancer [3], while a systematic search of the best evidence for the management of UTUC yielded only three such trials which are all very recent [4]. Notably only one major urological or oncologic association, the EAU (European Association of Urology), has published guidelines specific to UTUC [5]. Another professional organization, the International Consultation on Urological Diseases (ICUD), is now developing UTUC-specific guidelines, while others are including UTUC still as a subset of UCB guidelines or simply do not address UTUC in a guideline statement.

While significant similarities exist between UCB and UTUC, ignoring the important differences may be preventing us from optimizing therapy in patients with UTUC. Urothelial carcinomas of the lower and upper tract represent, indeed, two distinct yet related diseases. There are practical, anatomical, biological, and molecular differences that warrant consideration when risk stratifying and treating patients with these disparate twin diseases. This is specifically the reason for this book which is the “first” to specifically address this important, yet rare, disease.

As mentioned, there is, unfortunately, little evidence-based data to guide clinical decision-making in UTUC management. Recently, the tools available for the diagnosis and management of UTUC have improved significantly, complementing a growing understanding of the biology of this disease. To overcome the challenges that impede progress toward evidence-based medicine in UTUC, focused efforts based on multicenter collaborative research have augmented our understanding of this disease promising to improve the care we deliver to our patients.

UTUC requires appropriate management at all stages, since both the cure rate and morbidity are very sensitive to nuances of treatment. Yet proper risk stratifica-

tion remains a challenge owing to the difficulty of clinical staging. This book will address contemporary concepts and controversies, including the timely and accurate diagnosis of UTUC, emphasizing the integration of pathologic and radiographic variables for appropriate risk stratification. Important features regarding the natural history of UTUC will also be emphasized; the role of imaging and endoscopy in clinical decision-making, diagnosis, staging, and follow-up; and common pathways of metastatic spread. Up-to-date information regarding boundaries of surgical resection, indication and extent of lymphadenectomy, clinical staging of UTUC, the role of perioperative chemotherapy, and optimal management of metastatic disease will be detailed.

This “first” textbook on UTUC is such organized to give clinicians, healthcare professionals, researchers, opinion leaders, and patients state-of-the art information on epidemiologic, basic science, and clinical aspects of UTUC. A group of superb experts in various aspects of UTUC was assembled all over the world to critically evaluate the literature and report their experience. We were privileged to work closely with each contributor and are immensely grateful to them for their time and dedication. We believe this book will serve as a comprehensive reference on this important disease that deserves more awareness.

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