

Gene Therapy for Cancer

Hunt KK, Vorburger SA and Swisher SG (Eds)

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Approximately 70% of all gene therapy trials initiated since the first approved gene transfer study in humans in 1989 have targeted cancer. This predominance of cancer trials reflects both the promise of genetic technologies and the pressing need to improve treatment options and outcomes for advanced and difficult to treat cancer phenotypes.

Gene Therapy for Cancer attempts to provide a comprehensive view of contemporary technologies and approaches, including limitations and future directions. The book is logically structured, with contributions from over 60 specialist researchers and clinicians, divided into three major sections addressing gene delivery technology (vectors), anti-cancer approaches and clinical applications.

Individual chapters are generally detailed, well-illustrated and comprehensively referenced, but not well suited to the non-expert reader seeking an overview and synthesis of the field. This is partially off-set by an informative preface and an excellent chapter on 'Problems, Side-effects and Disappointments in Clinical Cancer Gene Therapy'.

Other shortcomings include inadequate attention to immune-mediated approaches and to enzyme pro-drug strategies. These are important because gene delivery technologies remain far too inefficient to rely on direct tumour cell killing effects alone.

Despite these limitations the book remains valuable, particularly as a reference for the more expert reader with special interest in cancer gene therapy. Overall the book is difficult to recommend for the personal library, but would be a worthwhile institutional acquisition.

*Ian Alexander, Gene Therapy Research Unit,
The Children's Hospital, Westmead, New South Wales.*

