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edited by

M. Sharon Stack, Ph.D.

and

David A. Fishman, M.D.

*Northwestern University Medical School
Chicago, IL, U.S.A.*



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*To our spouses, parents and children,
for their strength, wisdom, and love.*

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Contributors

- Ronald D. Alvarez, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, University of Alabama, Birmingham, AL 35233
- Junken Aoki, Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Tokyo, 7-3-1 Hongo, Bunkyo-Ku, Tokyo 113-0033, Japan
- Nelly Auersperg, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., V6H 3V5, Canada
- Mack N. Barnes, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, University of Alabama, Birmingham, AL 35233
- A.T. Baron, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905
- B.A. Barrette, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905
- Robert C. Bast, Jr, Departments of Experimental Therapeutics, Molecular Therapeutics, Gynecologic Oncology and Anatomic Pathology, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX 77030
- C.H. Boardman, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905
- Kenny Bozorgi, Section of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611
- Pierre O. Chappuis, Division of Medical Genetics, Department of Medicine, McGill University Health Center, Montreal, QC, Canada
- T.A. Christensen, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905
- Leeber Cohen, Division of Ultrasound, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611
- Tim Compton, Atairgin Technologies, 101 Theory, Irvine, CA 92612
- E.M. Cora, Department of Biochemistry & Nutrition, University of Puerto Rico, School of Medicine, PO Box 365067, San Juan, PR 00936
- D.V.S. DeFrias, Department of Pathology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611
- Louis Dubeau, Department of Pathology, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, Los Angeles, CA 90033
- Astrid Eder, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030
- James R. Erickson, AGY Therapeutics, 290 Utah Ave., S. San Francisco, CA 94080
- Xianjun Fang, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030
- J.M. Faupel-Badger, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

David A. Fishman, Section of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

William D. Foulkes, Division of Medical Genetics, Department of Medicine, McGill University Health Center, Montreal, QC, Canada

Tatsuro Furui, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Gifu University School of Medicine, 40 Tsukasa-machi, Gifu, 500-8705, Japan

Douglas Gaudette, Department of Human Biology & Nutrition Science, University of Guelph, ANNU Building, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G2W1

Supurna Ghosh, Department of Cell & Molecular Biology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

T. Greenwood, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Yutaka Hasegawa, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

Warner K. Huh, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, University of Alabama, Birmingham, AL 35233

Mahrukh Hussain, National Cancer Institute, Laboratory of Pathology, Building 10, Rm 2A33, 10 Center Drive, Bethesda, MD 20892

Robert Jaffe, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, & Reproductive Sciences, University of California San Francisco, 513 Parnassus Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122

S.C. Juneja, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Barry Kascinski, Department of Therapeutic Radiology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT 06520

P.C. Keh, Department of Pathology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

F. Joseph Kelly, Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, University of Alabama, Birmingham, AL 35233

Elise C. Kohn, National Cancer Institute, Laboratory of Pathology, Building 10, Rm 2A33, 10 Center Drive, Bethesda, MD 20892

J.M. Lafky, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Ruth Lapushin, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

H. Lee, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Jinsong Liu, Departments of Experimental Therapeutics, Molecular Therapeutics, Gynecologic Oncology and Anatomic Pathology, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX 77030

Karen Lu, Departments of Experimental Therapeutics, Molecular Therapeutics, Gynecologic Oncology and Anatomic Pathology, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX 77030

N.J. Maihle, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Muling Mao, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

Gordon B. Mills, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

R. Nayar, Department of Pathology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

A.M. Okonkwo, Department of Pathology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

Susan M. Pando, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT 06520

Jeff A. Parrott, Atairgin Technologies, 101 Theory, Irvine, CA 92612

K. C. Podratz, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

J.L. Reiter, Tumor Biology Program, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Peter E. Schwartz, Yale University School of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, 333 Cedar St., New Haven, CT 06520

Viji Shridhar, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

Gregory J. Sieczkiewicz, National Cancer Institute, Laboratory of Pathology, Building 10, Rm 2A33, 10 Center Drive, Bethesda, MD 20892

Steven Skates, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA 02144

Amy P.N. Skubitz, Department of Laboratory Medicine & Pathology, University of Minnesota Medical School, Minneapolis, MN 55455

David Smith, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN 55905

M. Sharon Stack, Department of Cell & Molecular Biology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

Fazal Haq Tabassam, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

Janos Tanyi, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

Hugh S. Taylor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT 06520

Walter Tribley, Atairgin Technologies, 101 Theory, Irvine, CA 92612

Nicole Urban, The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, Seattle, WA 98101

John Wiener, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030

Alice S.T. Wong, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., V6H 3V5, Canada

Teresa K. Woodruff, Department of Neurobiology & Physiology, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208

Yi Wu, Department of Cell & Molecular Biology, Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago, IL 60611

Jiamei Yu, Department of Pathology, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, Los Angeles, CA 90033

Shiangxing Yu, Department of Molecular Therapeutics, MD Anderson
Cancer Center, 1515 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030
Zhen Shang, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC 29425

Foreword

Ovarian carcinoma continues to be responsible for more deaths than all other gynecologic malignancies combined due to our continued inability to achieve detection of early (rather than advanced) stage disease and the lack of effective tumor-specific therapeutics. Despite many diagnostic imaging, surgical, medical, and therapeutic advances, little has changed over the past 40 years, as 70-75% of women newly diagnosed with epithelial ovarian carcinoma present with disseminated carcinomatosis (stage III or IV disease) with a resultant 5-year survival of 12 %. However, if disease is identified when confined to the ovary (Stage I), surgical intervention is less morbid, chemotherapy may not be required, and the resultant 5-year survival approaches 90%. Therefore the most effective means for improving survival requires detection of early stage rather than advanced stage disease.

Ovarian carcinogenesis, invasion and metastatic dissemination require a complex cascade of interrelated genetic, molecular, and biochemical events that regulate the neoplastic transition of normal ovarian surface epithelium. Ovarian cancers accumulate genetic aberrations that alter cell cycle control, DNA repair, genomic stability, apoptosis, transmembrane signaling, adhesion, and angiogenesis. Metastatic dissemination is influenced by numerous regulatory molecules and requires diverse biologic processes including cellular adhesion, migration, extracellular matrix degradation, directed invasion into host parenchyma, proliferation, and neovascularization. Many of these genetic aberrations and/or regulatory molecules are detectable in women with ovarian cancer and may ultimately serve as both novel tumor-specific biomarkers for early detection and for unique tumor-specific therapeutics. This volume summarizes recent advances in ovarian cancer detection and treatment and provides an analysis of current research into aspects of malignant transformation, growth control, and metastasis. A more detailed understanding of these processes may ultimately translate into the development of novel approaches for the detection and control of ovarian cancer.