Advances in Colorectal Cancer

This book by Kerr et al. has been presented at a time that is particularly rich in material on this subject. This shows the great interest that new basic research developments and new therapies have created in clinicians treating colorectal tumours. The text is 14 chapters long, written by authoritative European authors, mainly from the UK. There is one contribution from a US author, dealing with therapeutics targeting signal transduction in colorectal cancers. At first glance, the work seems to be complete and up to date, providing both a general review of the principal notions for the more expert clinicians involved in colorectal cancer treatment and a stimulus to go into more depth on specific points for trainee oncologists.

Certain chapters are particularly clear and complete in their arguments; in particular, those on molecular pathology, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Others, like that dedicated to screening, seem to be a little too brief and lacking depth. The chapter on surgery would seem to be one of these weaker areas. Furthermore, there is no mention of lymphatic mapping and sentinel node biopsy. Although the latter is not yet consolidated practice, it is undoubtedly an area of interest and relevance. The same is true for the issue of the role of micrometastases in lymph nodes and bone marrow and their much debated prognostic value. In addition, perhaps there should be a separate chapter on the treatment of colorectal cancers in elderly patients, given the emerging scale of this problem. Certain situations, such as the treatment of peritoneal carcinosis from colorectal cancer, are not covered, neither are endoscopic palliation by means of metallic stent or laser treatment of inoperable lesions.

Having said this, a global view of the text is still positive, being a balanced mix of basic scientific notions and clinical practices. In conclusion, this book with its up-dated bibliography, which is one of its strengths, should certainly find a place in the libraries of any clinician or basic researcher involved in the treatment of colorectal cancer who needs a quick and complete overview of the subject today.

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