Preface

Clinicians caring for advanced ovarian cancer patients are well aware of the challenges in dealing with the disease. Although it is frequently responsive to a range of conventional cytotoxic agents, it generally recurs and proves to be fatal. In facing the major obstacles to improvements in outlook – non-selectivity and drug resistance – the expectation today is that a better appreciation of the underlying biology and molecular pathology of the disease will translate into genuine progress in therapy. While there is still much to be understood about the different histological types of ovarian cancer, we are already seeing progress in linking the biology of ovarian cancer with novel targets and innovative therapies entering clinical trials.

The purpose of this book is to provide an up-to-date perspective, in essence a progress report to date on efforts to meet these challenges. The basis of successful therapeutic developments is a partnership between laboratory-based and clinical-based research scientists, and this is exemplified in the co-authorship of the 13 articles.

We have identified those areas of translational research which we believe have shown the most promise, or are likely to do so, in the treatment of ovarian cancer. Each author has provided a background review of the biology behind his/her emerging target for therapy, followed by a comprehensive and up-to-date summary of treatment results. A theme which runs throughout the book is the importance of predictive biomarkers and the message of patient selection for novel-targeted therapy is now a familiar one in modern cancer therapy.

The 13 chapters are prefaced by two introductory general contributions, describing existing treatments and the discovery of novel targets. A point sometimes made is that no sooner is a book such as this published than it is ‘out of date’. Clearly new information continues to emerge on a monthly basis, and this of course is to be applauded. But we believe that there is a role for a concise overall picture, especially

in 2010, which is a particularly eventful year for treatment developments in ovarian cancer. As final touches to the book are made, we are learning of the positive results in GOG 218 and ICON-7, which incorporated bevacizumab into first line treatment, and of the first clinical evidence of response in sporadic ovarian cancer to single agent PARP inhibitor treatment (see Chapters 3 and 6). These, and other positive trial data, provide real hope for improvements in treatment outcome in the near future. We hope that the book will prove useful to both clinicians and non-clinicians with interests in the field of new drug development in ovarian cancer and welcome any constructive comments and criticisms.

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