Preface

Pediatric cancers are rare events when viewed in the backdrop of all cancers. And within the scope of childhood cancers, there are more infrequent tumors that pediatric oncologists would classify as “rare pediatric tumors.” Therefore, what is the point in working on a book that specifically focuses on cancers that are “almost never” diagnosed? The most important reason may be the child who suffers with a specific tumor and the families of these children not knowing how to cope with these diagnoses.

In fact, rare cancers as a group are not as uncommon as their designation may suggest. They contribute to at least 5% of all childhood cancers. However, caring for children with such rare cancers requires a tremendous effort, primarily because sufficient information on diagnosis and therapy is missing. This book attempts to fill this information gap, by providing pediatricians, pediatric oncologists, and pediatric surgeons all currently available information required for diagnostic assessment and therapy of such patients. This book includes checklists for diagnostic procedures and detailed information on multimodal therapy of rare cancers. Thus, we hope that this book will find the interest of the international audience and will be taken to hand often, rather than rarely.

Advances in pediatric oncology have always been facilitated through sharing information and networking between experts. Networks first began among groups of institutions. Later, networks were developed on a national basis, fostered by national cooperative groups. Recently, more and more international pediatric collaborations have been established to advance prospective therapeutic trials for “more common pediatric cancers.” However, since rare tumors present with extremely low incidence, international collaboration is even more essential for these patients. Otherwise, each patient with a rare tumor will remain a “first patient” that cannot benefit from experience gathered from other patients with the same diagnosis.

Therefore, we are proud that in many aspects this book reflects the growing international collaboration in the field of rare tumors. For most chapters, authors from different national study groups have shared their knowledge and developed common recommendations. For some entities, these chapters represent the first comprehensive review in this particular entity to date. Sometimes, this has been a slow and stepwise but finally successful process. The discussions have also provided a fruitful and fantastic learning experience. We hope it may provide a framework for future evolution into internationally accepted guidelines. Finally, this book is also the result of better understanding, deeper collaboration, and growing friendship.
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