GLOBAL EPIDEMIOLOGY OF CANCER

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Chapter 3  Epidemiology of Lung Cancer  39

Anatomy and Function of the Lungs  39
Global Lung Cancer Mortality  39
Cigarette Smoking and Lung Cancer  41
Cigarette Smoking and Lung Cancer Mortality in the United States  42
Smoking and Histologic Changes in Lung Tissues  43
Transition of Lung Cancer Cell Types  43
Cigarette Smoking and Lung Cancer Histology  44
Tobacco Carcinogenesis  45
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Lung Cancer  45
Lung Cancer Risk Factors Other Than Tobacco  46
Lung Cancer Diagnosis, Treatment, and Survival  50
Primary Prevention of Lung Cancer  51
Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) and Lung Cancer  52
Smoking Cessation and Lung Cancer  52
Electronic Cigarettes (E-cigarettes)  52
References  53

Chapter 4  Epidemiology of Laryngeal Cancer  59

Anatomy of the Larynx  59
Histology  59
Global Epidemiology  59
Laryngeal Cancer in the United States  59
Age at Diagnosis of Laryngeal Cancer  59
Risk Factors for Laryngeal Cancer  60
Primary Prevention of Laryngeal Cancer  66
References  66

Chapter 5  Epidemiology of Cancers of the Lip, Oral Cavity, and Pharynx  69

Anatomy of the Oral Cavity  69
Oral Cavity Cancer Risk Factors  71
Cancer of the Oropharynx and Laryngopharynx  76
Cancer of the Nasopharynx  76
References  80

Chapter 6  Epidemiology of Esophageal Cancer  85

Anatomy and Function of the Esophagus  85
Global Epidemiology of Esophageal Cancer  85
Pathogenesis of Esophageal Cancer  87
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 7</th>
<th>Epidemiology of Stomach Cancer</th>
<th>91</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anatomy and Function of the Stomach</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Epidemiology of Stomach Cancer</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stomach Cancer Prevention: Epidemiology of an Unplanned Triumph</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helicobacter Pylorus and Stomach Cancer</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Histologic and Anatomic Subtypes of Stomach Cancer</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genetic Predisposition to Stomach Cancer</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention of Stomach Cancer</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 8</th>
<th>Epidemiology of Colorectal Cancer</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Epidemiology of Colorectal Cancer</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathogenesis of Colorectal Cancer</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screening for Colorectal Cancer</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 9</th>
<th>Epidemiology of Pancreatic Cancer</th>
<th>111</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Epidemiology of Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathogenesis of Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tobacco Smoking and Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol and Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk of Pancreatic Cancer: Combined Effect of Tobacco and Alcohol</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dietary Fat and Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic Pancreatitits and Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germline Mutations and Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somatic Mutations in Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epigenetics of Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obesity, Diabetes Mellitus Type 2, and Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islet Cell Tumors</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention of Pancreatic Cancer</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 10  Epidemiology of Primary Liver Cancer: Hepatocellular Carcinoma and Cholangiocarcinoma  123

Liver Function and Anatomy  123
Hepatocellular Carcinoma and Cholangiocarcinoma  124
Hepatocellular Carcinoma  124
Cholangiocarcinoma  131
References  134

Chapter 11  Epidemiology of Breast Cancer  139

Anatomy and Function of the Mammary Gland  139
Global Impact of Breast Cancer  139
Breast Cancer Detection, Staging, and Survival  140
Pathology of Breast Cancer  140
Mechanisms of Breast Carcinogenesis  141
Risk Factors for Breast Cancer  142
Mammographic Breast Density and Postmenopausal Breast Cancer Risk  146
Prevention of Breast Cancer  147
Summary of Breast Cancer Epidemiology  148
References  149

Chapter 12  Epidemiology of Ovarian Cancer  153

Global Epidemiology of Ovarian Cancer  153
Ovarian Cancer: The “Silent Killer”  153
Pathophysiology of the Human Ovary  153
Pathogenesis of Ovarian Cancer  153
Risk Factors for Ovarian Cancer  156
Protective Reproductive Factors and Ovarian Cancer  158
Oral Contraceptives and Ovarian Cancer  158
Screening for Ovarian Cancer  158
References  159

Chapter 13  Epidemiology of Cancer of the Corpus Uteri: Endometrial Cancer, Uterine Sarcoma, and Choriocarcinoma  163

Global Impact of Cancer of the Corpus Uteri  163
Malignant Tumors of the Corpus Uteri  163
Endometrial Cancer Versus Cervical Cancer: Cellular Origins  164
Trends in Endometrial Cancer  165
Endometrial Cancer: Postmenopausal Age of Onset  166
Subtypes of Endometrial Cancer  167
Models of Endometrial Carcinogenesis  167
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk Factors for Endometrial Cancer</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary: Epidemiology of Endometrial Cancer</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epidemiology of Uterine Sarcoma</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epidemiology of Choriocarcinoma</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 14 Epidemiology of Cervical Cancer</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Impact of Cervical Cancer</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Detection of Cervical Dysplasia</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathogenesis of Cervical Cancer</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk Factors for Cervical Cancer</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevention of Cervical Cancer</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 15 Epidemiology of Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Cancer</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Burden of Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Cancer</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Papillomavirus in Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Carcinoma</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Pattern of Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Squamous Cell Cancers</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus in Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Carcinoma</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epidemiology of Vaginal Cancer</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epidemiology of Vulvar Cancer</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epidemiology of Anal Carcinoma</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary Prevention of HPV-Related Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Cancer</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screening for Squamous Cell Vaginal, Vulvar, and Anal Cancer</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 16 Epidemiology of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Burden of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age-Specific Risk of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anatomy and Function of the Prostate Gland</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathogenesis of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finasteride and Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dietary Fat and Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genetics of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prostate Cancer and Sexual Activity</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplemental Antioxidants and Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonsteroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) and Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screening for Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zinc and Survival of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# CONTENTS

## Chapter 17 Epidemiology of Testicular Cancer 221

- Anatomy of the Testis and Spermatogenesis 221
- Pathology of Testicular Cancer 221
- Global Epidemiology of Testicular Cancer 223
- Cytogenetics and Genetics of Testicular Germ Cell Tumors 225
- Risk Factors for Testicular Cancer 225
- Prevention and Therapy of Testicular Cancer 227
- References 227

## Chapter 18 Epidemiology of Carcinoma of the External Male Genitalia: Penis and Scrotum 229

- Global Epidemiology of Penile Cancer 229
- Penile Cancer in the United States 229
- Age-Specific Incidence of Penile Cancer 229
- Pathology and Histology 230
- Risk Factors for Carcinoma of the Penis 230
- Cancer of the Scrotum 233
- Molecular Carcinogenesis 233
- Preventive Strategies 233
- References 234

## Chapter 19 Epidemiology of Urinary Bladder Cancer 237

- Anatomy and Function of the Urinary Bladder 237
- Global Epidemiology of Bladder Cancer 237
- Pathogenesis of Urinary Bladder Cancer 237
- Risk Factors for Urinary Bladder Cancer 238
- Prevention of Bladder Cancer 243
- References 243

## Chapter 20 Epidemiology of Kidney Cancer 247

- Anatomy and Function of the Kidneys 247
- Global Epidemiology of Kidney Cancer 247
- Global Pattern of Kidney Cancer 248
- Kidney Cancer Mortality 250
- Types of Kidney Cancer 250
- Pathologic Subtypes of Renal Cell Carcinoma 250
- Risk Factors for Renal Cell Carcinoma 250
- Risk Factors for Transitional Cell Carcinoma of the Renal Pelvis 254
- Prevention of Kidney Cancer 254
- References 254
Chapter 21  Epidemiology of Cancers of the Thyroid and Parathyroid  257

Thyroid Gland: Anatomy and Function  257
Benign Adenomas of the Thyroid Gland  258
Malignant Tumors of the Thyroid and Parathyroid  259
Global Burden of Thyroid Cancer  259
Trends in Papillary and Follicular Thyroid Carcinoma  261
Risk Factors for Thyroid Cancer  261
Iodine and Thyroid Function  267
Goitrogenic Dietary Factors and Thyroid Disorders  270
Medullary Thyroid Cancer  270
Prevention and Therapy of Thyroid Cancer  271
Epidemiology of Parathyroid Cancer  271
References  272

Chapter 22  Epidemiology of Adrenal Cancer  279

Anatomy and Function of the Adrenal Glands  279
Detection of Adrenal Tumors  279
Adrenal Cortical Carcinoma  280
Global Incidence and Mortality of Adrenal Cortical Carcinoma  280
Risk Factors for Adrenal Cortical Carcinomas  280
Tumors of the Adrenal Medulla: Neuroblastoma and Pheochromocytoma  282
Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia (MEN) and Sipple Syndrome  284
Summary of Adrenal Cancer Epidemiology  285
References  285

Chapter 23  Epidemiology of Malignant Melanoma  289

Global Epidemiology of Malignant Melanoma  289
Pathogenesis of Malignant Melanoma  291
Risk Factors for Malignant Melanoma  292
Prevention of Malignant Melanoma  294
References  294

Chapter 24  Epidemiology of Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer: Basal Cell, Squamous Cell, and Merkel Cell Skin Cancers  299

Anatomy and Function of the Skin  299
Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer  300
Age-Specific Incidence of Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer  300
Global Incidence of Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer  301
Longitudinal Trends in Basal Cell and Squamous Cell Carcinomas of the Skin  302
Solar Radiation and Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer  303
Contents

Risk Factors for Basal Cell Carcinoma of the Skin 304
Risk Factors for Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Skin 305
Genetics of Nonmelanoma Skin Cancer 308
Immunosuppression and Skin Cancer 309
Inflammogenesis of Skin Cancer 310
Risk of Multiple Basal Cell or Squamous Cell Carcinomas of the Skin 310
Vitamin D and Skin Cancer 311
Epidemiology of Merkel Cell Carcinoma 311
Environmental Prevention of Skin Cancer 311
Behavioral Prevention of Skin Cancer 312
References 313

Chapter 25  Epidemiology of Classic Sarcoma and Kaposi Sarcoma 319

Classification of Sarcoma 319
Global Epidemiology of Sarcoma 319
Sarcoma in the U.S. Population 319
Epidemiology of Pediatric Sarcomas 321
Epidemiology of Adult Sarcomas 325
Cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) in Sarcomas 334
Prevention and Control of Kaposi Sarcoma 334
Prevention and Treatment of Other Sarcomas 335
References 335

Chapter 26  Epidemiology of Lymphoma: Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, and Multiple Myeloma 343

Classification of Lymphoma 343
Epidemiology of Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma 343
Gender and Ethnic Differences in Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma 347
Risk Factors for Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma 347
Epidemiology of Hodgkin’s Lymphoma 355
Risk Factors for Hodgkin’s Lymphoma 357
Epidemiology of Multiple Myeloma 357
Waldenström’s Macroglobulinemia 359
Models of Pathogenesis of Lymphoma 359
Prevention of AIDS-Related Lymphoma 360
Summary 360
References 361

Chapter 27  Epidemiology of Leukemia 371

Classification of Leukemia 371
Hematopoiesis 371
Global Epidemiology of Cancer is written for all students and teachers of the health sciences, particularly those in epidemiology, public health, and medicine. Its main purpose is to present current and comprehensive information on the epidemiology, etiology, pathogenesis, risk factors, and preventive factors of common malignant neoplasms. In writing the book, I have made liberal use of the Internet and drawn upon worldwide information to address the global landscape of cancer.

The initial chapters of the book review molecular concepts of carcinogenesis and the global burden of cancer. Chapter 1 gives the reader a basic understanding of the molecular mechanisms critical to malignant transformation. Chapter 2 discusses the worldwide pandemics of tobacco abuse, alcohol abuse, obesity, and certain infections that have increased the incidence and mortality of many forms of cancer and pose unprecedented threats to the health of the human population. Standard epidemiologic methods and measures are also briefly addressed. Subsequent chapters of the book are arranged by human anatomy and physiology and discuss the diagnostic criteria, incidence, mortality, etiology, molecular pathogenesis, risk factors, preventive factors, therapies, and controversial issues for individual types of cancer.

Specific chapters address malignancies of the respiratory system (cancers of the lung, larynx, lip, oral cavity, and pharynx), the digestive system (cancers of the esophagus, stomach, colon, rectum, anus, pancreas, and liver), the female reproductive system (cancers of the breast, ovary, endometrium, cervix, vagina, and vulva), the male reproductive system (cancers of the prostate, testis, and penis), the urinary tract (cancers of the bladder, ureter, and kidney), the endocrine system (cancers of the thyroid and adrenal glands), the skin (melanoma and nonmelanoma skin cancers), connective tissues (sarcomas of soft tissue and bone), the immune system (lymphomas and leukemias), and the central nervous system (brain tumors).

Each chapter that is devoted to a specific type of cancer follows a similar format with subsections describing basic anatomy; diagnostic criteria; historical perspectives; the global burden of incidence and mortality; population differences and time trends in incidence, prevalence, and mortality; mechanisms of pathogenesis; risk factors; preventive factors; and opportunities for cancer prevention and control. Key epidemiologic studies and findings are presented in chronological order, with supporting evidence and references selected to guide readers to further study. It is assumed that readers are building on a fundamental knowledge base of human biology and have a strong sense of curiosity about medical science and cancer research. The text blends the traditional elements of cancer epidemiology with human anatomy, physiology, and molecular biology.

It is my hope that the text will provide a forum for examining current hypotheses regarding cancer epidemiology. Special sections of each chapter focus on controversial topics in cancer epidemiology with detailed information about the “pros” and “cons” of the controversy. This format facilitates active student discussion of molecular mechanisms of carcinogenesis and the relevant epidemiologic issues pertaining to the prevention and control of cancer.

I am deeply indebted to mentors, colleagues, and particularly students who have contributed to my education, research, and teaching over the past 4 decades. In essence, the book is an amalgamation of a longstanding continuum of exchange of information and ideas with many colleagues in the fields of medicine, public health, epidemiology, biostatistics, genetics, pathology, and molecular biology. The book also reflects the outstanding expertise of the editorial and production staff of Jones & Bartlett Learning; any errors or omissions in content or opinions on controversial issues are my responsibility. Finally, I am most grateful to my family for their support and understanding during the writing of this book.

Randall E. Harris