Book Review
J.L. Meyer
The Lymphatic System and Cancer
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The book provides key information presented at the 28th Annual Cancer Symposium held in March 6-7, 1993, in San Francisco, Calif., USA. The main topic was the lymphatic system and its role in tumor in experimental studies and clinical observations, as regional lymph nodes are obviously the first site or network where tumor metastases may be observed. Regional lymph node quality is thus one of the major prognostic factors for neoplastic diseases and frequently determines therapeutic strategies.

In the first chapter, L. Fajardo gives data on anatomic and immunologic properties of lymph nodes altered by neoplastic disease. It is not clear whether anatomically and functionally changed lymph nodes are able to stop further tumor invasion or dissemination. In early stages of neoplastic disease, lymph nodes may be able to protect the organism from metastasis, but later on, they do not seem to protect any more from dissemination and have lost their function. Thus, in most solid tumors, removal of invaded lymph nodes has only little impact on survival, but may be important for local control of neoplastic disease. In addition, tumor cells may skip the closest lymphatic drainage system and affect the next group of lymph nodes (e.g. mediastinal ‘skip’ in testicular cancer). Tumor cells are able to release specific factors interacting with homologous (autocrine) or heterologous (paracrine) cells. Response of many specific organ cells to paracrine factors may explain the predilection of metastases for some organs. Metastatic cells also receive and transmit negative paracrine growth factors, e.g. transforming growth factor-β.

The next chapter underlines the importance of radionuclide lymphoscintigraphy, a noninvasive, easily reproducible method. The third chapter is dedicated to adjuvant therapy of subclinical metastases to lymph nodes: therapy can be more aggressive but short-lasting and performed as soon as possible.

Further chapters discuss numerous controversies in current strategies of radiotherapy of head and neck tumors, lung, breast, genitourinary and gastric cancers, and rational approaches to the management of invasions in local lymphatic nodes. Many questions cannot be solved as not enough relevant data are available for multiple localizations, e.g. preference of radiotherapy or radiochemotherapy prior to chemotherapy, sequence of surgery in same stages or multimodal therapy of particular histological subtypes or localizations with or without nodular invasion. The book is recommended to radiotherapists and chemotherapists but also to clinical oncologists, diagnostic radiologists and surgeons as a valuable contribution to the problems of local invasion.
and metastasis, and diagnosis and rational management in a variety of cancer localizations and types.
V. Krcmery, L. Jurga, Bratislava
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