Editorial

Hepatocellular carcinoma presents a great clinical challenge throughout the world. It is the fifth most frequent cancer worldwide, and affects up to 20 per 100,000 individuals in certain regions of the world. Its high prevalence in the Asian-Pacific region and its underlying viral pathogenesis present a great clinical, economical and social burden for these regions. However, in Europe and North America this disease has also become a great clinical challenge, with increased ethanol consumption presenting a key etiological factor having a dramatic impact on a wide variety of gastrointestinal cancers, including liver cell cancer. In this issue of *Digestive Diseases*, up-to-date reviews provide information on the most important aspects of hepatocellular cancer, its epidemiology, pathogenesis, and treatment. In this issue you will find recent epidemiological data from Asia and Europe, including the role of various risk factors and clinical characteristics. Furthermore, the different treatment strategies, including operative and medical treatment, are presented, with special focus on the role of gene therapy and transplantation. The aim of these reviews is to provide a current picture of hepatocellular cancer and the role that recent findings in molecular pathogenesis, new developments regarding treatment modalities and the identification of molecular markers may play in cancer prevention and treatment.

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