Editorial

The prevention of neoplastic disorders of the digestive system has moved ahead from a state of hopeful expectations in future possibilities to some current solid grounds of evidence based on interventions. Careful studies of familial genetic disorders, the identification of molecular targets, important epidemiological work revealing conditions for gastrointestinal cancer risks, and finally the appreciation of preneoplastic lesions has set an important stage in this field. The wide diffusion of standard diagnostic methods such as endoscopy as well as interventional techniques make it possible to offer new chances of maintaining or restoring health in patients that otherwise would incur a fate determining neoplastic disease. However, despite these achievements, to date we are facing an era that stands just at the beginning of an epochal revolution in the medical approaches to prevent and cure neoplastic disorders. The human genome sequence and the continuous development of molecular technologies will open more opportunities to define disease-promoting and determining genes in their interaction with the environment.

The dilemma is that in several circumstances the epidemiological and biological evidence will precede the required proof of confirmatory intervention studies by many years. This could become a concern if not handled with the appropriate sensitivity and alertness. In this issue of *Digestive Diseases* we have selected some of the key topics related to cancer prevention or new approaches to cancer therapy. Some strategies and approaches have already become part of our medical management (i.e. screening for colorectal cancer and polypectomy) and others find themselves in ongoing debate and need more specification (eradication of *H. pylori* for cancer prevention in risk individuals and populations at risk), some open fascinating future possibilities and some propose surgical interventions to prevent neoplasias in very selected cases.

We are indebted to all the authors for their invaluable contributions in providing an important update and further stimulation of our interest in this exploding field of medicine.

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