Genetic Disorders of the Exocrine Pancreas

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The world of pancreatology has suddenly and amazingly been enlightened by the discovery that certain genetic events are linked to specific types of pancreatitis. David Whitcomb is the big star in this sun-cluster burst, for it was he who showed back in November 1996, the relationship between a mutation in the cationic trypsinogen (PRRS1) gene and hereditary pancreatitis. The Milan Third International Symposium on Hereditary Diseases (April 5–7, 2001) represents the pinnacle of achievement of the biennial symposia held since then. David Whitcomb hosted the First Symposium in Pittsburgh (April 5–6, 1997) and then Chuck Ulrich ran the Second Symposium in Cincinnati (March 19–21, 1999). Markus Lerch (Münster) and Patrick Maisonneuve (Milan) organized the latest Symposium, along with Peter Durie (Toronto) and Al Lowenfels (Valhalla, N.Y., USA) along with the original hosts. Already we can see that the understanding of pancreatitis requires the increasingly close collaboration between basic science, clinical genetics, epidemiology and clinical pancreatology. The greater link at international level also reflects the synergistic effect of interdisciplinary collaboration amongst leading groups that cannot be found simply in one locality.

Written by experts, this book is produced by a quality publisher for clinicians and scientists alike. The collection of chapters are based on the papers from the Third Symposium and published for rapid access in the journal *Pancreatology*. Contained herein therefore are the world's leading players in this new high level scientific endeavour of genetics and pancreatitis. The reader will find completely original insights in the understanding of pancreatitis as told by those who have made ground-breaking discoveries. Many of the concepts are based on data that are barely emerging from the laboratories, the clinic and field studies.

Cognisant of our clinical and ethical responsibilities, the edition includes guidelines for the genetic testing for hereditary pancreatitis and secondary screening for cancer developed by the Symposium' participants under the auspices of the International Association of Pancreatology.

Of course this is just the beginning, but all clinicians who manage pancreatitis, either in children or in adults, require the knowledge in this book.

Prof. John P. Neoptolemos, MA, MB, BChir, MD, FRCS, President of the International Association of Pancreatology and Secretary of the European Pancreatic Club, Liverpool, February 4, 2002.

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