Apoptosis and Its Relevance to Autoimmunity
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Over the last 15 years, apoptosis has moved from a peripheral circumscribed interest amongst a small group of scientists to the mainstream of modern biology and a highly prominent and, in some cases, dominant focus of medical research. This is particularly true in the field of immunology where more than 10 billion cells are turned over each day and cell death is a necessary part of immune tolerance and contraction following immune activation.

In this volume of *Current Directions in Autoimmunity* on Apoptosis, contributors discuss the three major areas of apoptosis research: Extrinsic Death Receptor Pathways, Intrinsic Death Pathways, and the mechanisms responsible for Apoptotic Cell Clearance. In each of these sections, the proteins and signal transduction pathways are delineated and genetic alterations that lead to autoimmune diseases are described. Although most cell death abnormalities have been associated with systemic autoimmune disorders such as lupus, it is evident that regulation of cell death is pertinent to disease expression in many organ-specific diseases as well.

The precise understanding of how molecular defects in apoptotic pathways lead to different diseases provides innovative directions in autoimmunity research that will ultimately facilitate the development of new classes of disease-modifying agents.

Sincere thanks is given to the outstanding contributors of this volume for their time and effort.

*Keith B. Elkon*
Seattle, Wash.