

Preface

For many years I have been tempted to write a comprehensive book on the role of infectious agents in human cancers. Progress has been particularly rapid in this field during the course of the past 25 years, and today we can convincingly report that approximately 20% of the global cancer incidence is initiated or promoted by infectious events. I had admired the task carried out by Ludwik Gross. Since his two-volume publication *Oncogenic Viruses* in 1961, with additional editions in 1970 and in 1983, a number of books have appeared on similar topics, virtually all of them authored by multiple scientists and some of them very heterogeneous in content and structure. For these reasons, I planned to write a book which attempted to develop a more unifying concept and a consistent structure for the individual chapters. Considering the overwhelming magnitude of data, I was sure that I could not undertake this task during my active period as scientific director of the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg, and so postponed this for “active retirement”. Ultimately, I was pleased that I was able to persuade James Fox from Harvard University to contribute Chapter 10, on *Helicobacter*, as this would have been beyond my personal experience. He immediately consented and jointly with Timothy C. Wang and Julie Parsonnet delivered the chapter in time.

The book is not intended to cover the structure and molecular biology of the agents presented in great detail, but rather aims to concentrate on those aspects that link the respective agents to human oncogenesis. The book should introduce interested colleagues, clinicians, and students to the field, and help to analyze some of the developments that even 20 years ago attracted only minimal attention. Today, this research has culminated in the development of the first – and apparently successful – vaccines for the prevention of specific, common human cancers, cervical carcinomas, and liver cell cancer. Within the book we have tried to provide the readers with an extensive bibliography after each individual chapter, in order to permit further studies on the subject. However, even an attempt to select the most important papers in the field will almost inevitably miss some publications that our colleagues consider as very important. Consequently, I apologize in advance to all of those readers who feel that we did not cover their own or other research areas adequately.

Fortunately, the response on the part of my colleagues was friendly and generous, and they provided helpful suggestions and corrected some of my statements. I am

particularly indebted to George and Eva Klein, Stockholm, for their many extremely helpful comments, to Bernhard Fleckenstein, Erlangen, and Georg Bornkamm, Munich, Vladimir Vonka, Prague, Nikolaus Müller-Lantzsch, Homburg, to Reinhard Kurth, Norbert Banner, and Georg Pauli, all Berlin, and to my Heidelberg colleagues, Frank Rösl, Rainer Schmidt, Lutz Gissmann and Henri-Jacques Delecluse. My secretary, Gudrun Kütke, competently and patiently checked the entire manuscript and corrected initial mistakes. Sherryl Sundell, the Managing Editor of the *International Journal of Cancer*, tried to correct at least some of the “Germanisms” in the language.

A special note of gratitude goes to my wife, Ethel-Michele de Villiers, who not only patiently tolerated two-and-a-half years of evenings and weekends devoted to reading and writing, but also actively contributed by discussing and modifying part of the text. Last, but not least, I would like to mention my granddaughters, Talisa and Johanna, who were to some extent neglected during this period. This is hopefully going to change now.

*Harald zur Hausen
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