PREFACE

It is common knowledge that early diagnosis and, if possible, prevention, represent one main goal for improving the outcome of neoplastic diseases. The high morbidity and mortality due to gynecologic cancer represents a major issue in women's health, calling for much needed efforts to achieve an early diagnosis. A quite unique success story in gynecologic pathology is that of the spectacular decline of the incidence of invasive cervical cancer in those areas of the world where precancerous lesions are identified and removed before they become overtly cancerous, due to an organized system of early detection. The earliest descriptions of cervical precancerous lesions were based on microscopic analysis of histological tissue sections and of cytologic smears. They were followed by virologic studies that identified the causal agent (HPV), and recently, by a vaccine aimed at the worldwide prevention of this common and still highly lethal cancer. This sequence of events highlights a significant aspect of "translational medicine" encompassing basic science discoveries, histologic and cytologic descriptions, "translated" into clinical-surgical management and prevention.

Unfortunately not all gynecologic cancers can be handled as successfully. Ovarian cancer, while not the most common is still the most lethal gynecologic malignancy, despite recent progress. Early diagnosis of the majority of ovarian cancers is rare and an organized system of early detection and prevention, as for cervical cancer, does not exist

at the present time. This book is presenting the early stages and precursor lesions of gynecologic cancer in a multidisciplinary approach. The subjects are treated from the point of view of different specialties, such as pathology (including computerized image analysis), molecular biology and clinical gynecology. The authors also express their personal insights, based on their individual professional experience, original research and recent scientific progress. The various subjects are presented in a relatively concise manner, offering the reader a diversity of approaches as well as an update of our knowledge at the present time, in the hope that better understanding of disease inception and spread will lead to improved therapeutic and preventive efficiency.

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