# Antitumor Drug Resistance

Editors: B.W.Fox and M.Fox



Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York Tokyo

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#### Contributors

N. K. Ahmed · B. Barlogie · W. T. Beck · A. Begleiter
A. K. Belousova · J. R. Bertino · J. M. Boyle · J. Brennand
C. T. Caskey · T. A. Connors · B. Drewinko · M. Fox · H. Fuji
G. J. Goldenberg · J. F. Henderson · B. T. Hill · J. A. Houghton
P. J. Houghton · M. M. Ip · J. G. McVie · M. Moore · P. S. Schein
D. Scott · K. D. Tew · D. M. Tidd · M. J. Tisdale · J. R. Uren
J. V. Watson · A. D. Welch · J. M. Whitehouse

**Editors** 

B.W. Fox and M. Fox



Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York Tokyo 1984 Professor Brian W. Fox, Ph. D. Dr. Margaret Fox

Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9BX, Great Britain

#### With 99 Figures

ISBN 3-540-13069-1 Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg New York Tokyo ISBN 0-387-13069-1 Springer-Verlag New York Heidelberg Berlin Tokyo

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data. Main entry under title: Antitumor drug resistance. (Handbook of experimental pharmacology; v. 72) Includes bibliographical references and index. 1. Antineoplastic agents. 2. Drug resistance. 3. Tumors – Chemotherapy. I. Ahmed, N.K. II. Fox, Brian W. III. Fox, Margaret. IV. Series. [DNLM: 1. Drug resistance. 2. Antineoplastic agents – Pharmacodynamics. 3. Neoplasms – Drug therapy. W1 HA51L v. 72/QZ 267 A633] QP905.H3 vol. 72 615'.1s [616.99'4061] 83-27139 [RC271.C5]

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Printing and bookbinding: Brühlsche Universitätsdruckerei, Giessen 2122/3130-543210

#### **List of Contributors**

- N. K. Ahmed, Division of Biochemical and Clinical Pharmacology, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 332 North Lauderdale, P.O. Box 318, Memphis, TN 38101/USA
- B. BARLOGIE, Medical Oncology, The University of Texas System Cancer Center, M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute, 6723 Bertner, Houston, TX 77030/USA
- W.T. Beck, Division of Biochemical and Clinical Pharmacology, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 332 North Lauderdale, P.O. Box 318, Memphis, TN 38101/USA
- A. Begleiter, The Manitoba Institute of Cell Biology and the Department of Medicine, University of Manitoba, 100 Olivia Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E OV9, Canada
- A. K. Belousova, Laboratory of Biochemical Pharmacology, All-Union Cancer Research Center, Moscow 115478, USSR
- J. R. Bertino, Departments of Internal Medicine and Pharmacology, Yale University School of Medicine, 333 Cedar Street, P.O. Box 3333, New Haven, CT 06510/USA
- J. M. BOYLE, Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9BX, Great Britain
- J. Brennand, Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9BX, Great Britain
- C. T. CASKEY, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Laboratories, Departments of Medicine, Cell Biology and Chemistry, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX 77030/USA
- T. A. Connors, MRC Toxicology Unit, Medical Research Council Laboratories, Woodmansterne Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4EF, Great Britain

VI List of Contributors

B. Drewinko, Section of Hematology, Department of Laboratory Medicine, Box 73, The University of Texas System Cancer Center, M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute, 6723 Bertner, Houston, TX 77030/USA

- M. Fox, Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9BX, Great Britain
- H. Fuл, Molecular Immunology, Roswell Park Memorial Institute, New York State Department of Health, 666 Elm Street, Buffalo, NY 14263/USA
- G. J. GOLDENBERG, The Manitoba Institute of Cell Biology and the Department of Medicine, University of Manitoba, 100 Olivia Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3E OV9, Canada
- J. F. HENDERSON, Cancer Research Unit, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H7, Canada
- B. T. HILL, Laboratory of Cellular Chemotherapy, Imperial Cancer Research Fund Laboratories, P.O. Box 123, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2 3PX, Great Britain
- J. A. HOUGHTON, Division of Biochemical and Clinical Pharmacology, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 332 North Lauderdale, P.O. Box 318, Memphis, TN 38101/USA
- P. J. Houghton, Division of Biochemical and Clinical Pharmacology, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 332 North Lauderdale, P.O. Box 318, Memphis, TN 38101/USA
- M. M. IP, Department of Experimental Therapeutics, Grace Cancer Drug Center, Roswell Park Memorial Institute, New York State Department of Health, 666 Elm Street, Buffalo, NY 14263/USA
- J. G. McVie, Clinical Research Unit, Netherlands Cancer Institute, Plesmanlaan 121, 1066 CX Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- M. Moore, Immunology Division, Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9BX, Great Britain
- P.S. Schein, Division of Medical Oncology, Department of Pharmacology, Georgetown University Hospital, 3800 Reservoir Road, N.W., Washington, DC 20007/USA
- D. Scott, Paterson Laboratories, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9BX, Great Britain
- K. D. Tew, Division of Medical Oncology, Department of Medicine, Georgetown University Hospital, 3800 Reservoir Road, N.W., Washington, DC 20007/USA

List of Contributors VII

D. M. Tidd, School of Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, Norfolk NR47TJ, Great Britain

- M. J. TISDALE, CRC Experimental Chemotherapy Group, Department of Pharmacy, University of Aston in Birmingham, Gosta Green, Birmingham B4 7ET, Great Britain
- J. R. Uren, Genex Corporation, 16020 Industrial Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20877/USA
- J. V. WATSON, MRC Clinical Oncology and Radiotherapeutics Unit, Medical Research Council Centre, The Medical School, University of Cambridge, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 2QH, Great Britain
- A. D. Welch, National Cancer Institute (National Institutes of Health), Drug Evaluation Branch, Division of Cancer Treatment, Blair Building, Room 428, 900 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20205/USA
- J. M. Whitehouse, Department of Medical Oncology, CRC and Wessex Regional Medical Oncology Unit, Centre Block CF99, Southampton General Hospital, Southampton SO9 4XY, Great Britain

#### **Preface**

The study of tumour resistance to anticancer drugs has been the subject of many publications since the initial discovery of the phenomenon by J. H. Burchenal and colleagues in 1950. Many papers have been published since then reporting development of resistance to most of the well-known anticancer agents in many different animal tumour systems, both in vivo and in vitro. Many different mechanisms of resistance have been described, and it is clear that the tumour cell has a wide diversity of options in overcoming the cell-killing activity of these agents.

Definition of the magnitude of the phenomenon in the clinic is, however, much more problematical, and it is with this in mind that the initial chapter, seeks to outline the problem as the clinicians see it. It appears that the phenomenon of true resistance to a drug, as the biochemist would recognise it, is an important cause of the failure which clinicians experience in treating the disease. The extent of the contribution of this phenomenon to the failure of treatment cannot easily be evaluated at the present time, but it is hoped that the development and application of new and more sophisticated techniques for the analysis of cellular subpopulations may help to give a more exact estimate and to shed some light on the causes of failure of many of the present therapeutic techniques.

The purpose of this book is to bring together in a single volume the results of many years' work by key people in this field. The different studies of the mechanisms of resistance are considered; in a separate section, the ways in which tumours adapt to different drug groups, taken primarily from the experimental field, but also - where recognised - from the clinical field, are described. The armoury of experimental techniques is rapidly expanding; along with improved methods of measuring drug transport and DNA repair, monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies are being employed in different ways. One of the main aims has been to identify specific changes which take place in the biochemistry of the tumour cell, especially at the cell surface, when it exhibits resistance to an anticancer drug. We are already learning about the changing levels of specific proteins, e.g. enzymes and cell-surface glycoproteins; with the newer concepts in immunology and the application of powerful techniques such as flow cytometry, a better understanding of the depth and extent of the problem of resistance is being achieved. The greatest emphasis in this book has been placed on the individual mechanisms determined to be those by which tumours have become resistant to specific drugs, and on the experimental observations and arguments that have led to the present understanding of these mechanisms.

X Preface

A detailed study of the origin of resistance is basic to further progress in the treatment of cancer. It could not only modify the course of treatment, but may also, as our knowledge of "intrinsic resistance" increases, modify the type of initial treatment used, based as it is on a rapid analysis of the spectrum of sensitivity of the tumour. Although, to some extent, clonogenic assays, xenografts and renal capsule implant systems are being used for the initial analysis, the need for speed is paramount in making the early decision required for effective therapy. It is clear that some indicator of drug sensitivity at the time of the pathological investigation would be ideal, and in order to arrive at this level of diagnostic efficiency, flow cytometry will be a necessary intermediate stage in the study of properties of tumour subpopulations. Identifying a spectrum of sensitive and resistant cells in a tumour will provide a more rational basis for the choice of a drug or drug combination. More detailed pharmacokinetic data in humans are also needed if we are to take advantage of the sensitivity pattern obtained by subpopulation studies at the pathological level.

A knowledge of the genetics of the tumour, as well as that of the host, is important to understanding the sensitivity spectrum of a new tumour, and a knowledge of these factors could ultimately provide a basis for optimising the therapeutic index of the drug. The flow cytometry analytical technique will, again, be a useful tool for the effective manipulation of these factors.

During the preparation of this book it has become clear that the word "resistance" requires further description. It seems to us that "resistance" is a word that can justifiably be related only to the property of a single cell. It could be defined as the ability of a single tumour cell to survive a local concentration of a damaging drug that would otherwise have been expected to kill it. This could be an innate property of the cell (intrinsic resistance) or could have been acquired by a rapid adaptive response (adaptive resistance). If a cell were to survive a low concentration of a damaging agent and divide, probably in the face of the loss of many similar cells within the population of which it is a part, it could form the basis of a new population of resistant cells through a series of divisions. These may be further selected for reduced sensitivity (selected resistance) or actively become adapted by expressing alternative biochemical pathways, enhanced protective group synthesis, etc. (acquired resistance). In all such cases the type of resistance would merely describe the property of a single cell within the system being studied.

The tumour mass, which includes the population of tumour cells within its matrix, exhibits an overall sensitivity – usually measured according to changes in volume, number or weight – part of which may be a reflection of the tumour cell population it contains. The overall response of the tumour-cell population depends on the average sensitivity of the cells within it. The acquisition of resistance by a whole tumour could thus be the result of a shift in the proportion of intrinsically sensitive and resistant cells, influencing the overall average sensitivity of the population. The term "resistant tumour" is so widely used, however, that to speak of the "population resistance" of a tumour or tumour-cell population in this context would seem to be more accurate. It must be recognised that this is an average property of the tissue, and may not involve anything other than a change in the proportion of existing cells.

Preface XI

This collection of chapters, we believe, achieves the interim aim of bringing together the many parameters that are presently considered to constitute the nature of resistance in tumour populations; we hope that they will provide a basis for further discussions to substantially improve the efficacy of drug treatment of cancer in humans.

We would like to thank the many authors who adhered very closely to the timetable for submission of their chapters; we regret the omission of two of the originally planned chapters from the latter half of the book at such a late date that alternatives could not be found. However, much of the material that was to be presented in these is well covered in other contributions.

In particular we thank the Chief Editor, Professor A.D. Welch, for his continued vigilance, Mr. Ric Swindell for the indexing and Ms. Gillian A. Simpson for the typing of the necessary correspondence. Finally, the courtesy and efficiency of Mrs. Doris Walker of Springer-Verlag is much appreciated.

Manchester

Brian W. Fox Margaret Fox

## **Contents**

### Section I: Concepts of Drug Resistance

CHAPTER 1					
Clinical Setting. J. M. WHITEHOUSE					
A. Introduction					3
B. Resistance – A Clinical Phenomenon?					4
C. Disease Assessment					6
D. Drug Selection					9
E. Measurement of Response					11
F. Can Resistance be Quantified Clinically?					13
G. Factors Influencing Changes in Tumour Volume					13
I. Heterogeneous Target Populations of Tumour Cells					13
II. Changes in Histology					14
III. Second Malignancy					15
IV. Miscellaneous Factors Contributing to Tumour Volume					15
H. Influence of Clinically Determined Drug Resistance on Mana					16
I. Resistance and Toxicity					16
II. Resistance and Survival					18
References					19
CHAPTER 2					
Experimental Setting. J. F. HENDERSON					
A Introduction					23
A. Introduction  B. Origins of Resistance  I. Changes in the Tumor					23
I Changes in the Tumor		16	100	in	23
1. Nongenetic Origins					24
2. Genetic Origins		i		gi.	25
II. Changes in the Host		i		i	26
III. Changes in Pharmacological Parameters					27
IV Experimental Systems	N/Z	in	i	Vel	
IV. Experimental Systems	m	Ė			27
I Differences in Drug Concentration	1/10				28
I. Differences in Drug Concentration				i	28
2. Nucleotide Formation	di	1			28
3. Drug Catabolism					29

3.71	TT	
X	V	

11/		
Can	tan	Fa
Con	LCII	LS

F. Other Immunobiological Characteristics and Possible Mechanisms of
Immunological Changes
G. Conclusions
References
CHAPTER 5
The Molecular Basis of Genetically Acquired Resistance to Purine Analogues in Cultured Mammalian Cells. J. Brennand and C. T. Caskey
A. Introduction
B. The HPRT Enzyme
C. Biochemical Basis of Drug Resistance
D. Drug Resistance as a Consequence of Mutation Within the HPRT Gene 91
I. Phenotypic Variation Resulting from Non-mutational Events 91
II. Evidence that Drug Resistance Results from Mutation Within the
HPRT Gene
III. Molecular Analysis of the HPRT Gene
E. Perspectives
References
Section III: Cellular Aspects
POJ Summar School Forgological Company
CHAPTER 6
Cell Cycle Perturbation Effects. B. Drewinko and B. Barlogie. With 14 Figures
A. Introduction
I. General
II. Proliferating and Quiescent Cells
III. Age-Dependent Response
IV. Cell Synchronization
V. Cell Cycle Perturbation
VI. In Vitro Systems
VII. Cell Death
VIII. Cell Cycle Traverse Rate-Dependent Lethality
B. Materials and Methods
C. Results
I. Proliferating Versus Nonproliferating Cells 107
II. Age-Dependent Survival Response 109
III. Cell Cycle Perturbation
1. Asynchronous Cell Populations
2. Synchronized Cells
IV. Protection of Cell Kill by Inhibition of Cell Cycle Traverse 128
D. Discussion

XVI Contents

~			-	-
CH	A D		D	7
		1 L	11	-

Tumour Resistance and the Phenomenon of Inflammatory-Cell Infiltration M. Moore. With 2 Figures	
A. Introduction	
I. Heterogeneity of Tumour Cells	
II. Intratumour Lymphoreticular Cells: Biological Implications	
III. Methodological Approaches	
B. Characterization of Intratumour Host-Cells	
II. Criteria for the Identification of Leucocyte Populations and Subpopulations	. 147
C. Intratumour Leucocytes of Experimental and Human Neoplasms:	
Descriptive Studies	. 151
I. Preliminary Considerations	
Biological Correlates	. 151
111. Nature of Cens inititating ruman Neopiasins.	
Clinicopathological Correlates	. 156
<ul><li>IV. Factors Which Determine Leucocyte Infiltration of Tumours .</li><li>D. Effector Functions of Intratumour Leucocytes:</li></ul>	
Experimental Neoplasms	
I. Systemic Effector Mechanisms	. 162
II. Macrophage Function	. 166
III. T-Cell Function	. 168
IV. Natural Killer Function	. 169
V. Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity	
E. Effector Functions of Intratumour Leucocytes: Human Neoplasms	
I. Macrophage Function	
II. T-Cell Function	. 171
III. Natural Killer Function	. 174
F. Limitations of In Vitro Functional Data	. 175
G. Implications for Therapy	. 176
References	. 178
CHAPTER 8	
Flow Cytometric Methods for Studying Enzyme Activity in Populations of Individual Cells. J. V. Watson. With 12 Figures	
A. Introduction	187
B. Principles of Flow Cytometry	187
C. Enzyme Measurements Using Light Absorption	
D. Enzyme Measurements Using Fluorogenic Substrates	
I. Assays with Single Substrates	
II. Assays Using Two Substrates Simultaneously	
E. Conclusions	
References	. 201

Contents XVII

CHAPTER 9
Chromosome Studies. D. Scott. With 17 Figures
A. Introduction
B. Chromosome Constitution and Resistance
I. Derivation of Drug-Resistant Cells
II. Resistance to Various Classes of Antitumour Drugs 213
1. Purine Analogues
2. Pyrimidine Analogues
3. Antifolates
4. Alkylating Agents
5. Platinum Compounds
6. Antibiotics
7. Vinca Alkaloids
C. Resistance to Induced Chromosome Damage
D. Summary
References
References
CHAPTER 10
Alterations of Drug Transport. G. J. GOLDENBERG and A. BEGLEITER
A. Introduction
B. Mechanism of Drug Transport
I. Characteristics of Passive Diffusion and Mediated Transport 24
II. Kinetics of Membrane Transport
III. Drug Uptake by Multiple Mechanisms
IV. Evaluation of Drug Efflux
C. Antitumor Drug Resistance Due to Defects in Membrane Transport 245
I. Alkylating Agents
1. Nitrogen Mustard
2 Melphalan 250
2. Melphalan
4. Nitrosoureas
5. Chlorambucil
6. Busulfan
7. Procarbazine
II. Antimetabolites
1. Methotrexate
2. 6-Mercaptopurine and 6-Thioguanine
3. Fluorouracil
4. Arabinosylcytosine and Arabinosyladenine
III. Antibiotics
1. Actinomycin D
2. Daunorubicin and Doxorubicin
3. Bleomycin
4. Mitomycin C

XVIII	Contents

IV. Alkaloids       27         1. Vinca Alkaloids       27         2. Colchicine       28         V. Hormones       28         1. Glucocorticoids       28         2. Estrogens       28         3. Androgens and Progestins       28         D. Future Considerations       28         References       28	7 30 32 32 33 34
CHAPTER 11	
Cell Hybridisation. J. M. BOYLE. With 5 Figures	
A. Introduction	01 01 04 06 06 10 11 11 12 14 15 18 19 19
Section IV: Modification of Tumor Biochemistry	
CHAPTER 12	
Drug Resistance and DNA Repair. M. Fox. With 4 Figures	
A. Introduction	36 36 37 37

Contents	XIX
----------	-----

II. DNA Synthesis on a Template Containing Unexcised DNA Lesions C. The Relationship Between DNA Repair and Cellular Sensitivity I. Alkylating Agents	340 342 345 345 352 355 356 358
References	302
CHAPTER 12	
CHAPTER 13  Cyclic AMP and Prostaglandins. M. J. TISDALE. With 5 Figures	
30 中国10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 1	2117
A. Cyclic AMP	
II. Tumour Growth Inhibition by Cyclic AMP and Derivatives	
III. Role of Cyclic AMP in Regression of Hormone-Dependent	
Mammary Tumours	373
IV. Role of Cyclic AMP in Growth Inhibition by the Antitumour	274
Alkylating Agents	
2. Effect on Specific Cyclic-AMP-Binding Proteins	
3. Alterations in Protein Kinase Activity	381
4. Possible Role of Cyclic AMP in the Cytotoxic Action of	
Alkylating Agents	382
V. Effect of Other Antitumour Agents on the Cyclic Nucleotide System	202
B. Prostaglandins	
C. Conclusion	
References	
CHAPTER 14	
Properties of Mitochondria. A. K. Belousova. With 4 Figures	
A. Introduction	391
B. Damage of Mitochondrial Membranes by Alkylating Agents	
C. The Structure and Functions of Energy-Coupling Complexes in Mitochondria	302
D. Search for Correlations Between Cell Sensitivity or Resistance to	372
Alkylating Agents and Functional State of Mitochondrial Membranes	394
References	400

XX Contents

CHAPTER 15				
<b>Mechanism of "Resistance" Towards Specific Drug Groups.</b> T. A. Co With 10 Figures		OF	RS.	
A. Mechanisms of Alkylation				101
B. Mechanisms of Cytotoxicity and Antitumour Action				
C. Selectivity of Antitumour Action of the Alkylating Agents				
D. Patterns of Resistance				407
E. Mechanisms of Resistance				408
I. Resistance Through Decreased Cellular Uptake				
II. Resistance by Inhibition of the Activation of Prodrugs				413
III. Resistance by Deactivation of Reactive Alkylating Agents				417
IV. Resistance by Interaction with Non-essential Nucleophiles				418
F. Conclusions				
References				
References				421
CHAPTER 16				
Nitrosoureas, K. D. Tew and P. S. Schein				
A Pharmacology				425
B Mechanisms of Drug Resistance	Ó			426
B. Mechanisms of Drug Resistance	i		i	127
D. Manaaddusts and Crass Linking				427
D. Monoadducts and Cross-Linking		٠		428
E. Interference with the DNA Repair Process				429
F. Subnucleosomal Nitrosourea Binding				430
G. Effects on Pyridine Nucleotides				431
H. Modulation of Drug Effect with Steroids and Other Transcription	on	al		
Modifiers				432
J. Overcoming Resistance to Alkylating Agents with Nitrosoureas				
K. Clinical Therapeutic Activity				
L. Conclusions				
References	19			430
References				439
Section V: Antimetabolites				
Section V. Antimetabolites				
Antipurines. D. M. Tidd. With 6 Figures				
A. Introduction				445
B. 8-Azaguanine				
I. Metabolism and Mechanism of Action				
II. Resistance				
C. 6-Mercaptopurine and 6-Thioguanine				
I. Metabolism and Mechanism of Action				
II. Resistance				459