"There is new ammunition in the war against CANCER. These are the bullets.” This appeared on the cover of the May 28, 2001 issue of TIME. This global weekly news magazine featured molecularly targeted therapy in that issue and declared that we are entering an era where a new concept of cancer therapy based on molecular biology may lead to substantial conquest in the war against cancer.

Imatinib mesylate, an orally available tyrosine kinase inhibitor (TKI), has shown unexpectedly high clinical efficacy against chronic myelogenous leukemia, a notorious disease that is refractory to classical chemotherapies. Joensuu et al. were inspired by the discovery of gain-of-function mutations in gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs) by Hirota et al. and alternatively used TKI in a patient with far advanced GIST. They showed that imatinib exerted a dramatic effect on this gastrointestinal (GI) malignancy as well. Their astounding revelation triggered the explosive development of molecularly targeted therapy. Since then, GISTs, which are rare GI tract tumors, have captured the interest of oncologists as an experimental bench to explore new cancer therapies. The concept of gain-of-function mutations in GISTs has led to the identification of driver gene mutations in lung cancers and the success of TKIs in GISTs has resulted in the propensity for molecularly targeted therapy in medical oncology. Meanwhile, the acquisition of a deep understanding of GISTs has also fueled the emergence of new challenging clinical issues: whether or not we can overcome secondary resistance to TKIs, how we should manage potentially malignant small GISTs, whether or not secondary surgery is effective for metastatic GISTs, and how we should demonstrate that. Although researchers have addressed these issues and many GIST-related papers have been published, a platform to systematically discuss and learn state-of-the-art therapy for GISTs remains lacking.

The editors considered that it was time to organize current knowledge of the diagnosis and treatment of GISTs as a step toward the next stage because more than 15 years have passed since imatinib therapy was introduced clinically.

This book aims to deliver an update of progress in GIST research and clinics. The contents include a selection of excellent articles from GIST-related ones that were recently published in AME journals, including Chinese Clinical Oncology and Translational Gastroenterology and Hepatology. Readers will be able to integrally advance their knowledge of GISTs and easily understand the current status of GIST research because the book contains reviews that concisely summarize accumulated evidence from GIST studies ranging from basic science to clinical practice and from endoscopic treatment to multimodality treatment of metastatic GISTs. Reviews and case reports of rare GISTs may serve as a helpful guide to clinicians in treatment decision-making for rare diseases. Furthermore, young researchers will be able to use this book as an example for writing papers with utilization of the PDF search engine.

I hope that this book will be an indispensable material for all clinicians and researchers who are involved in GISTs.

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