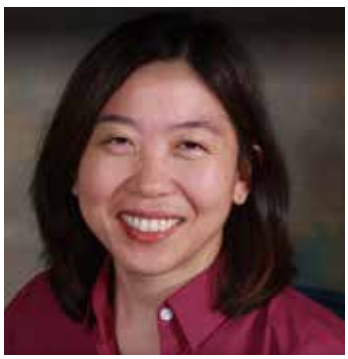
In view of the armamentarium of advances that have been brought to bear in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), including new and emerging indications for targeted therapies and immunotherapies, small cell lung cancer (SCLC) looks very much like an orphan disease. SCLC comprises 10–15% of lung cancers but has an overall 5-year survival rate of 6% as opposed to 23% for NSCLC. Therapies for SCLC have remained stagnant in comparison to developments in NSCLC.

Major advances in the treatment of SCLC all occurred several decades ago, when radiotherapy was initially established as a generally preferred treatment over surgery and the importance of chemotherapy became clear. The standard package of several cycles of platinum-based doublet chemotherapy accompanied or followed by curative-intent or consolidative radiation therapy has remained essentially unchanged since the 1990s. Recently, investigators around the globe have attempted to improve outcomes by leveraging a more sophisticated understanding of the biology of SCLC, particularly its unique genetic, molecular, and immunophenotypic characteristics.

This internationally sourced collection of articles provides an outstanding summary of the latest scientific, translational, and clinical insights related to SCLC. A roadmap is laid out providing a wide scope from which future progress is likely to arise. In particular, there are articles focused on the role of genomic alterations, cancer stem cells, and neuroendocrine markers. Translational efforts targeting novel chemotherapy combinations, antiangiogenic therapy, targeted therapies, and immunotherapy are spotlighted. Incisive discussions of new clinical trials, including those aimed at elucidating the precise indications for radiotherapy, are admirably grounded in an understanding of the natural history and biology of this disease. All stages of SCLC are addressed, from the earliest stage where surgery may still play a role through limited-stage and salvage or second-line situations. The growing relevance of liquid biopsy and the important special case of the frail elderly patient are likewise not ignored.

In summary, I am honored to provide the introduction to this comprehensive and sweeping collection. I am confident that this first-edition compilation will provide an excellent initial primer for those unfamiliar with SCLC as well as state-of-the-art inspirational updates for those immersed in efforts to improve outcomes for this deadly disease. We all hope for future advances that will drive a second edition.



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