
Preface

Asthma and COPD have now become amongst the commonest diseases in the world, and both are increasing. There have been major advances in our understanding of asthma and significant improvement in asthma management, particularly with the early and more widespread use of inhaled corticosteroids. Yet, despite effective therapy for asthma, there is a pressing need for new and more specific therapies that control the disease or even cure the underlying disease process. Progress in understanding and treating COPD has been much slower, mainly because the disease has been relatively neglected. None of the treatments available today prevent the relentless progression of COPD and there is an urgent need to develop novel approaches.

The aim of this book is to offer a state-of-the-art description of the exciting progress in research and development that is being made with new therapies for asthma, allergy and COPD. We are very aware that many large tomes that contain review chapters by leading scientific and clinical authorities are already available on allergic and respiratory diseases. On this basis, our major intention was to link the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry with academic and clinical opinion. In order to develop better therapies, we rely on this partnership, since the modern-day reality is that novel drug discovery and production generally occur from within the industry.

We have been amazed by the enthusiastic response from our colleagues in the pharmaceutical industry in providing as much information as they can about early developments with their novel potential therapies. By way of introduction to these contributions, we have overviews written by leading academic clinical scientists. With over 200 authors, and a total of 80 chapters, we hope



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to provide concise and highly condensed information. In this way we have tried to have specialists from the industry writing on their own fields of interest. This is a rapidly advancing field, and this format of segmented brief chapters has allowed us to put information on the internet, and should permit provision of regular updates.

The book has 14 sections that range from an introduction covering general aspects of drug development for asthma and COPD to a review of currently available small-molecular-weight synthetic medicinal chemical classes: bronchodilators, corticosteroids, anti-leukotrienes, and mediator and protease inhibitors. We then proceed from allergen and IgE-directed therapies to T cell immu-

nomodulation and cytokine-directed therapy, to chemokine receptor and adhesion molecule inhibition, to therapy directed against cell signalling and transcription, before looking at future prospects for genetic therapy.

A considerable team has been involved in producing this volume, and we are very grateful for the vision of Chris Bolliger, Editor of *Progress in Respiratory Research*, who always wanted us to go for something 'completely different'! In addition, we have found the entire staff at

Karger Medical Publishers, Basel, a superbly professional group of people to interact with.

We hope that you will find this book interesting and helpful, and that it will give as much enjoyment to you, the reader, as we have had in its design and editing. Finally, and most importantly of all, we hope that this book will help in the process of finding better therapy for patients with allergic and respiratory diseases.

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