Preface

Immunotherapy in Clinical Medicine

Active Immunotherapy in the form of pre-exposure primary and secondary (booster) vaccination has made the most significant impact on the current state of human health and longevity by preventing childhood and adult infectious diseases. The current availability of a vaccine (HPV vaccine) that prevents a number of cancers by inducing an immune response to a virus has opened up the field of preventive cancer vaccines. Passive immunotherapy using preformed antibodies and modulation of cytokine cascade by agonists and antagonists has added to the therapeutic armamentarium for diseases involving many organ systems. A brief overview of the history and current status of immunotherapy is presented in the first article. The next 10 articles review in detail the current status of immunological therapies in various diseases. The major focus of these articles is on clinically available immunotherapies. However, all the authors have included information on investigational and evolving immunotherapies. Such therapies for potentially fatal acute infectious disease caused by resistant pathogens are the need of the hour considering that no novel antimicrobial agents are in the pipeline. Even if such novel agents did become available, microbes developing resistance to antimicrobial agents are by now an expectation rather than news. It seems that understanding and utilizing physiology will be the most lasting intervention against pathology of human disease. That being the case, broadening and deepening of basic science curricula during medical school and graduate training should be a priority for educators and policy-makers. Simply teaching about a list of currently prevalent diseases in a superficial manner is likely feeding them today without concern for tomorrow. We find one of Osler’s quotes most appropriate in this context: “We are easily misled by our experience and not only are the reactions (of patients) themselves variable, but we, the doctors, are so fallible, ever beset with the common and fatal facility of reaching conclusions from superficial observations, and constantly misled by the ease with which our mind fall into the ruts of one or two experiences.”
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