

Preface

This volume on Cell Death Proteins is timely in view of the explosive interest in programmed cell death or apoptosis, the obvious counterpart to cell proliferation. Although the field is progressing rapidly, this volume is a snapshot in time of several topics important to our knowledge of apoptosis.

Of the six contributions included here, some focus on apoptotic proteins and others on the inhibitors of apoptosis. The first paper is from the laboratory of R. Muschel and collaborators, who discourse on cell cycle checkpoints and apoptosis. M. Tocci reviews the structure and function of interleukin-1 β -converting enzyme, the prototypical protease involved in the mammalian cell death machine. R. Baserga and collaborators discuss the role of IGF-I receptor in apoptosis. J. Reed reviews the Bcl-2 family of proteins, and L. Grasso and W. E. Mercer review p53-dependent apoptosis. Finally, A. Uren and D. Vaux inform us about viral inhibitors of apoptosis.

Thus, the contents of this book provide an excellent overview of some of the major players in the cell death cascade and its controls. Interested readers will be found in every sector of modern biological research, including cancer research, signal transduction, and biochemistry.

GERALD LITWACK