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Foreword

Hepatitis C virus infection: from discovery to eradication

Masao Omata & Tatsuo Kanda

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) was discovered in 1989 by molecular biological techniques. The discovery of cDNA fragments of HCV has made it possible to diagnose HCV infection and its related liver disease.

Amazingly, 80% of patients with the most advanced disease such as cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma in Japan are infected by this virus. This has totally changed the concept of hepatology, because we had previously been giving the lectures, talks and educations without knowing the real etiology of the majority of cases.

The elucidation of the natural courses of this disease from acute to chronic, and eventually to cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma, has provided us with insights into how to prevent the individual steps in the disease process and save the patient's life. After a quarter of a century, a rapid turnaround has been noticed in the field of treatment, in particular during the last few years.

Hepatitis B virus was discovered in 1964, a long time before HCV, but the eradication of hepatitis B virus has not been in prospect yet. By contrast, as will be shown in this book, the eradication of HCV, newly discovered in 1989, is becoming the reality in the majority of patients by several emerging therapeutic options.

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