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Epigenetic Factors Involved in the Development of Tumors of the Digestive Tract

Guest Editors:

Dr. Luca Falzone
l.falzone@istitutotumori.na.it

Dr. Saverio Candido
scandido@unict.it

Dr. Caterina Maria Grillo
grillo.caterinamaria@ gmail.com

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Message from the Guest Editors

The digestive tract is constantly exposed to environmental factors, including air pollutants, microorganisms, and harmful agents (e.g., smoke and alcohol), able to induce both genetic and epigenetic changes that may alter its cellular biology and homeostasis. A growing body of evidence demonstrated that these stimuli induce molecular alterations involved in the development of inflammatory and chronic diseases, including cancer. In this context, among the epigenetic modifications induced by environmental factors, DNA methylation and the alteration of the expression levels of non-coding RNAs (ncRNAs), including microRNAs (miRNAs), circRNA, and lncRNA, have been recognized as key mechanisms underlying tumor development in the digestive tract. Therefore, the early identification of such epigenetic alterations may give further information for the understanding of tumor biology and may predict the risk of cancer development.

On these basis, the aim of this Special Issue is to highlight the main findings regarding the identification of epigenetic factors involved in neoplastic transformation and their potential role as useful biomarkers for the diagnosis and prognosis of tumors affecting the digestive tract, from the oral cavity to the rectum. In addition, this Special Issue aims to collect the latest discoveries about the use of epigenetic factors as novel and promising therapeutic targets for the treatment of tumors.

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Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Dr. Chris O'Callaghan
Centre for Cellular and Molecular Physiology, Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Oxford, Roosevelt Drive, Oxford, OX3 7BN, UK

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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Contact Us

Biology
MDPI, St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel, Switzerland

Tel: +41 61 683 77 34
Fax: +41 61 302 89 18
www.mdpi.com

mdpi.com/journal/biology
biology@mdpi.com
@Biology_MDPI