
Preface

The era of molecular pathology has arrived. From its promising beginnings in research laboratories, the field has grown, and continues to grow, to become a vital part of the care of an ever-increasing number of patients.

Because of its recent emergence from the research laboratory, many molecular pathology protocols are still to be found in the primary literature, and have not appeared in a text. *Molecular Pathology Protocols* contains laboratory protocols that have been developed by many of the authors for use in clinical molecular pathology laboratories and describe in detail how to perform these assays. This book is therefore intended for clinical laboratory use by medical technologists and pathologists. It will also be of interest to research workers who are performing these assays.

In its broadest meaning, pathology is the study of disease, and therefore it follows that any disease for which the molecular basis is understood would be suitable as a topic for inclusion in this work. When selecting protocols, it was necessary to place limits on the number of chapters that could be feasibly presented in a single work. Those protocols that were selected are performed more frequently, or have achieved recognition as having important diagnostic utility in contemporary practice. A decision was made to exclude inherited genetic diseases with certain exceptions, such as those diseases that are associated with thrombotic states and are part of the traditional domain of pathology. Undoubtedly their etiology would have been of much interest to the great pathologists of the past. A small number of chapters describe methods that are available as commercial assays. These chapters, particularly in certain methodological details described in the notes, offer much fuller description of the methods than is often available.

As will be apparent, many of the protocols described have been developed as in-house methods by the authors. This point highlights a characteristic of the field of molecular pathology: the lack of standardization of most assays, even those in reasonably wide clinical practice. Unlike some other areas of clinical laboratory analysis, there are no definitive methods available for molecular pathology. It would be of advantage to the field, if only to provide consistency among laboratories, if there were to be agreement on

analytical issues such as probes and primer sets for various assays. These protocols offer methods that the authors have found to work in their laboratories. As with all clinical laboratory testing, the results should be interpreted in conjunction with other laboratory data and clinical findings.

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