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Role of Proteases in Cancer

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Message from the Guest Editors

Protein degradation, or proteolysis, is one of the most important processes in living organisms; therefore, proteases perform multiple functions in both normal and pathological states. Particularly, proteolytical degradation of extracellular matrix proteins by proteases is accepted as an event promoting neoplastic progression, although proteases that suppress cancer spreading have been identified as well.

Proteases perform complex and dynamic roles in cancer, as their expression is altered in most tumor cells. There are five major types of human protease classes established based on their catalytical mechanism: aspartic, cysteine, metalloproteinases, serine, and threonine. The roles of proteolytic enzymes may vary among cancer types and stages of malignant transformation and may include multiple classes of proteases and multiple proteolytic pathways within one type of cancer. Over the past four decades, significant information has been generated about the different functions of proteases in cancer. This Special issue will highlight the newest findings and advances in our understanding of proteinase-mediated molecular pathways in cancer.

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