Textbook of Human Reproductive Genetics

Edited by
Karen Sermon
Professor, Research Group Reproduction and Genetics, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Stéphane Viville
Professor, Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire (IGBMC), Institut National de Santé et de Recherche Médicale (INSEERM)
U964/Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) UMR 11704/Université de Strasbourg, Illkirch, and Centre Hospitalier Universitaire, Strasbourg, France
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Contributors

Esther B. Baart
Division of Reproductive Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Erasmus MC, University Medical Center, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Alison Bagshawe
Altrui Ltd, North Yorkshire, UK

Ashwini Balakrishnan
Magee-Womens Research Institute, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Déborah Bourchis
Institut Curie, Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) UMR 3215/Institut National de Santé et de Recherche Médicale (INSERM) U934, Paris, France

J. Richard Chaillet
Magee-Womens Research Institute, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Wybo Dondorp
Department of Health, Ethics, and Society, Research School GROW, Maastricht University, Maastricht, the Netherlands

Ursula Eichenlaub-Ritter
University of Bielefeld, Faculty of Biology, Institute of Gene Technology/Microbiology, Bielefeld, Germany

Elis El Inati
Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire (IGBMC), Institut National de Santé et de Recherche Médicale (INSERM) U964/Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) UMR 1704/Université de Strasbourg, Illkirch, France

Masoud Zamani Esteki
Laboratory of Reproductive Genomics, Department of Human Genetics, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Patricia Fauque
Hôpital de Dijon, Université de Bourgogne, Laboratoire de Biologie de la Reproduction, Dijon, France

Parveen Kumar
Laboratory of Reproductive Genomics, Department of Human Genetics, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Alison Lashwood
Clinical Genetics, Guy's Hospital, London, UK

Inge Liebaers
Center for Medical Genetics, UZ Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Willy Lissens
Center for Medical Genetics, UZ Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Aafke P. A. van Montfoort
Department of Reproductive Medicine, Maastricht University Medical Center, Maastricht, the Netherlands

Aleksandar Rajkovic
Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Science, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Karen Sermon
Research Group Reproduction and Genetics, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Catherine Staessen
Center for Medical Genetics, UZ Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Jan Traeger-Synodinos
Laboratory of Medical Genetics, National, and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

Niels Van der Aa
Laboratory of Reproductive Genomics, Department of Human Genetics, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium
List of contributors

Diane Van Opstal
Department of Clinical Genetics, Erasmus MC, University Medical Center, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Willem Verpoest
Center for Reproductive Medicine, UZ Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Stéphane Viville
Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire (IGBMC), Institut National de Santé et de Recherche Médicale (INSERM) U964/Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) UMR 1704/Université de Strasbourg, Illkirch, and Centre Hospitalier Universitaire; Strasbourg, France

Thierry Voet
Laboratory of Reproductive Genomics, Department of Human Genetics, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Guido de Wert
Department of Health, Ethics, and Society, Research School GROW, Maastricht University, Maastricht, the Netherlands

Svetlana A. Yatsenko
Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Science, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA
Preface

Genetic advances in the reproductive sciences are arguably occurring with greater rapidity than those in any other organ system. Not only have the dazzling technological advances of molecular genetics become applicable in reproduction, but meteoric advances are occurring in diagnosis and treatment. Assisted reproductive technology (ART) has rendered infertility far less daunting. Yet treating those couples, that once would not have conceived, may generate offspring who differ from the general population.

*Textbook of Human Reproductive Genetics* addresses pivotal topics of clinical and scientific interest. There is much for the student, practicing physician, and laboratory scientist alike. Crisply edited by renowned geneticists of international repute – Stéphane Viville and Karen Sermon – the book begins with a précis of genetic principles – molecular, single gene, and cytogenetic. The novice quickly gets up to speed.

The basic science landscape targets fields of most immediate relevance to reproduction. Techniques suitable for analyzing a single cell are explained, one cell’s (6 picograms) DNA obviously necessitates different approaches than if larger amounts of DNA were available. Thus, Kumar *et al.* explain where we are now and where we will soon be (microarrays and next generation sequencing). Cell division and the consequences of its perturbation are framed, respectively, by Eichenlaub-Ritter in her chapter on meiosis and by Baart and Van Opstal in their chapter on the role of aneuploidy in human embryonic development. Yatsenko and Rajkovic extend the dialogue to cytogenetic disorders affecting infertility. Monogenic causes are not neglected, Liebaers and colleagues covering infertility in pleiotropic presentation. This is especially relevant because it has become clear that common conditions like premature ovarian failure or polycystic ovarian syndrome are heterogeneous. Thus, looking at rare genes whose perturbations cause syndromes could be a fruitful strategy in identifying more common disorders like premature ovarian failure.

Van Monfoort covers epigenetic phenomena as related specifically to ART. The basic science component of this text also lets us know that genes must be expressed, without which it matters little whether they are present or absent. To this end, Balakrishnan and Chaillet discuss transgenerational effects mediated by epigenetic alteration. Fauque and Bourc’his shed light on transposons as newly appreciated determinants of male reproductive fitness.

The scientific framework having been established, specific clinical aspects of human reproduction are then systematically addressed. Traeger-Synodinos and Staessen cover clinical preimplantation genetic diagnosis. Individualized ART tests are discussed by Verpoest. Lashwood and Bagshaw review genetic counseling, providing not only traditional “how to” checklists but also discussing the emotional impact experienced by client families. Defense mechanisms like denial and anger impede patients from gaining requisite knowledge, and must be overcome. Dondorp and de Wert extend this theme by their treatise on ethical considerations.

Our authors have thus provided us with a text broad in coverage. Contributions by an international spectrum of authors – European and American – assure us provincial views are eschewed. Here we have a text that students, practitioners, and scientists involved in reproduction genetics should have on their shelves, or readily accessible in their computer.