

INTRODUCTION

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This is the third *European Respiratory Monograph (ERM)* on lung cancer. The first in 1990 and the second in 2001 concentrated on just lung cancer; however, the current *ERM* now includes mesothelioma, which is reaching the peak of its epidemic within Europe. The *ERM* has been significantly updated from previous issues with a wide variety of contributors who have generously submitted cutting-edge research. This *ERM* is both scientific and educational, and provides readers with an updated and comprehensive educational tool to use in everyday clinical practice.

Lung cancer remains an alarming disease with high mortality and social cost. In Europe it remains the most common killing cancer in both males and females. Over the last 30 yrs there has been little improvement in the survival of lung cancer patients and its management remains a major challenge for respiratory physicians, surgeons and oncologists. However, since 2001, huge steps have been made in understanding the biology of lung cancer, as well as great improvements in diagnostic staging and the introduction to the therapeutic armory of new molecularly targeted therapies. Indeed, comparing the last *ERM* on lung cancer to the current *ERM*, it is surprising how much more is known and how clinical practice has altered in the last 8 yrs.

Thus, while the disease remains unconquered we hope this issue of the *ERM* illustrates that there have been major advances over the last 8 yrs which we will continue to build upon.

We hope this issue of the *ERM* is of interest to all our colleagues and helps to improve the understanding of this most serious of all cancers.