

p53: The Gene that Cracked the Cancer Code

By Sue Armstrong



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All of us have lurking in our DNA a most remarkable gene, which has a crucial job – it protects us from cancer. Known simply as p53, this gene constantly scans our cells to ensure that they grow and divide without mishap, as part of the routine maintenance of our bodies. If a cell makes a mistake in copying its DNA during the process of division, p53 stops it in its tracks, summoning a repair team before allowing the cell to carry on dividing. If the mistake is irreparable and the rogue cell threatens to grow out of control, p53 commands the cell to commit suicide. Cancer cannot develop unless p53 itself is damaged or prevented from functioning normally.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, p53 is the most studied single gene in history.

This book tells the story of medical science's mission to unravel the mysteries of this crucial gene, and to get to the heart of what happens in our cells when they turn cancerous. Through the personal accounts of key researchers, *p53: The Gene that Cracked the Cancer Code* reveals the fascination of the quest for scientific understanding, as well as the huge excitement of the chase for new cures – the hype, the enthusiasm, the lost opportunities, the blind alleys, and the thrilling breakthroughs. And as the long-anticipated revolution in cancer treatment tailored to each individual patient's symptoms begins to take off at last, p53 remains at the cutting edge.

This timely tale of scientific discovery highlights the tremendous recent advances made in our understanding of cancer, a disease that affects more than one in three of us at some point in our lives.

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Editorial Review

Review

“It's not the destination that's important here, but the journey. This is not only a story about the gene on chromosome 17, nor only about the nature of cancer, but also about how science works.” *?The Boston Globe*

“Ms. Armstrong's book comes alive in the sections where she explores cancer's human toll . . . She also captures the excitement of researchers as they come upon eureka moments.” *?The Wall Street Journal*

“A brilliant narrative that captures the essence of the scientific challenges faced by researchers in this pursuit and the progress that has been made in our understanding of p53.” *?Science*

“She covers every aspect of cancer development, giving us a sense of how this evasive illness persists, even in the face of modern medicine . . . It is with hope and hard work that we can look to the future with optimism.” *?San Francisco Book Review*

About the Author

Sue Armstrong is a science writer and foreign correspondent who has worked for New Scientist and BBC World Service. Since the 1980s, she has undertaken regular assignments for the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS, writing about health issues. The author of *A Matter of Life and Death: Inside the Hidden World of the Pathologist*, Armstrong lives in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Users Review

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