This is a book in an annual series of Advances in Cancer Research, edited by George Vande Woude and George Klein. The book consists of five lengthy reviews of new or topical areas in cancer biology. The topics are: 1) HAMLET (Human alpha-lactalbumin made lethal to tumor cells); 2) Survivin and Apoptosis control; 3) Retroviral insertional mutagenesis to tag cancer pathways; 4) Ubiquitin-mediated proteolysis affecting cell cycle regulatory proteins; and 5) The role of epigenetic variability and the evolution of human cancer.

The topics are varied and the reviews are well written and do not assume detailed specific knowledge of the subjects. However solid grounding in molecular biological concepts and techniques is essential. Those with such a background will find the reviews informative. Some of the chapters are easier to read than others, with the discussion of HAMLET being particularly lucid and that of retroviral mutagenesis being much heavier.

The strength of this book is that it provides five comprehensive reviews of topics that may otherwise stay within the confines of specialist journals. The interested reader is taken through the background, current research and potential implications of the findings. There is a moderate amount of speculation in the text. The distinction between data and speculation is clear and the speculative comments contribute to the strength of the book by giving the reader an insight into the thinking of experts in the areas. The future prospects are discussed with the correct balance of imagination and caution.

The five topics covered are quite diverse, ranging from the intricacies of the cell cycle regulation to a discussion of epigenetic variability in human cancer. All are focused on molecular biology, reflecting the fact that this remains the focus of most basic cancer research. It will be a very useful introduction to an area for someone embarking in research in that particular field and a good overview for anyone wanting a general understanding of these promising areas of cancer research. Those primarily interested in clinical research will find the book difficult, but may find some of it helpful in introducing them to new concepts.

It is unlikely to find its way into many private collections, but is worth a place in university and research institute libraries.

G B Mann
The Royal Melbourne Hospital & Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
Melbourne, Vic