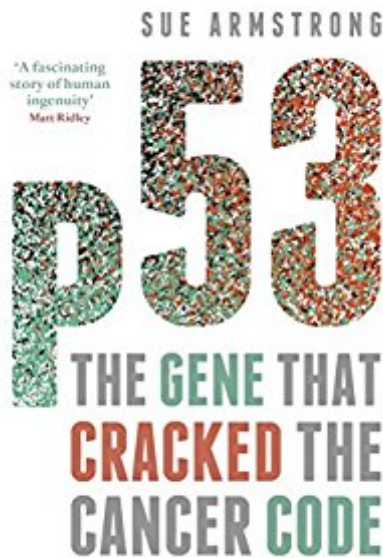


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P53: The Gene That Cracked The Cancer Code



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

File Size: 792 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Sigma; 1 edition (November 20, 2014)

Publication Date: November 20, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00NB14L6Y

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #203,321 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #28

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Customer Reviews

If you are fascinated by research--the painstaking and time-consuming studies; the collaboration and the competition among experts searching for breakthroughs; and the surprising role of serendipity--you may find Sue Armstrong's "p53: The Gene that Cracked the Cancer Code" enlightening and entertaining. This is more than a dry recitation about how brilliant minds all over the world solved a difficult puzzle. It is also a heartbreaking story about unlucky families who have inherited a mutant version of p53 that makes them susceptible to a variety of cancers. When p53 was identified, no one suspected that it is "a master switch in our cells whose main function is to prevent tumors arising when their DNA is damaged." Since then, p53 has "become the most studied single gene in the history of molecular biology." Scientists in the United States, England, France, Brazil, China, and other countries have devoted a great deal of time, money, and effort to find out where p53 is located, how it works, what happens when it malfunctions, and how it might be used in the battle against cancer. In spite of Armstrong's admirable goal to make this work of non-fiction clear to the layperson, many readers will find the material too technical and complex to grasp in its entirety. Still, Armstrong has done her homework, her enthusiasm is infectious, and she effectively elucidates the key points of her thesis. In addition, she introduces us to a variety of researchers, including Bert Vogelstein of Johns Hopkins, who has been involved in the study of p53 for many years, and Arnie Levine of Princeton, one of four individuals who discovered the gene in 1979. Ms.

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