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An extensive number of genes have been mapped into numerous signalling pathways — the 'omics' era is now well and truly with us. But how do we interpret this embarrassment of riches? To help us, in this month's issue is a free 'Targeting Cancer Pathways' poster, sponsored by Novartis, depicting some of the recently elaborated pathways that are mutated in cancer cells. Indeed, several early-phase clinical trials are examining potential therapeutic targets thrown up by this research, all of which hold promise for the future.

A specific cancer pathway is also the subject of a review on page 341 by Nancy Hynes and colleagues, who discuss the ERBB family of tyrosine-kinase receptors. Insights into the ERBB signalling pathways are pinpointing new targets for the next round of ERBB-focused drug development.

Stephan Marx, on page 367, investigates how a greater knowledge of the genes disrupted in multiple endocrine neoplasia (MEN)1 and MEN2 can be used to develop therapies. But, he warns, in the case of MEN1, we still need to understand more about how the mutated *MEN1* gene, encoding menin, functions normally before it can be considered as a bona fide antitumour target.

The question of whether more or less expression of the RUNX gene family contributes to tumorigenesis is addressed by James Neil and colleagues on page 376. These proteins elicit a complex phenotype dependent on how and where their genes are expressed or repressed, and caution will be needed if these genes are to be used as successful therapeutic targets.

So, new cancer-pathway data are certainly being generated, and we await the fruits of these labours in the form of improved targeted therapies.


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