Introductory Immunology: Begin the Journey
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Primer to the Immune Response is a textbook designed for college level immunology courses. This textbook is both written by and the information compiled by the world’s leading experts in immunological research. This is the textbook’s second edition, which has been improved from the first edition by the inclusion of some teaching tools and resources.

The information in this textbook is conveniently organized into two major parts: Part I: Basic Immunology, and Part II: Clinical Immunology. The material within each part is organized into a number of chapters. The first two chapters of Part I serve as an introduction to the entire textbook and provide an overview of essential foundational concepts such as innate vs. adaptive immunity (p 6–16), clinical immunology (p 17–18), cell types of the immune system (p 21–34) and an overview of the lymphatic system (p 39–49). There is, however, some expectation of prior knowledge. Subsequent chapters provide in-depth details on immune mechanisms of action. Part II explores physiologically- and medically-relevant topics,
including, but not limited to, bacterial pathogenesis (Chapter 13), transplantation (Chapter 17), hypersensitivity (Chapter 18), and autoimmune responses (Chapter 19). Within these chapters, the information provided is very up-to-date. For instance, the authors include a section on cancer vaccines (Chapter 16; p 449) and one on the incorporation of stem cells in immunotherapy (Chapter 17; p 477), and they even address the misconceptions around vaccines (Chapter 14; p 365).

Each chapter is structurally similar, with a number of sections, subsections, plates, figures, and tables. Each chapter also contains colored inset boxes in the margins that provide chapter links, other hyperlinks, notes, highlights and relevant research. Each chapter ends with a summary section of take-home points, a self-quiz, conceptual questions and suggested additional readings. The entire textbook ends with several comprehensive appendices and a glossary of terms.

An excellent feature of this textbook is the ‘Focus on Relevant Research’ boxes that are found throughout. These sections are an exciting way to present primary research with data to students and to allow instructors to integrate this information into their lectures. One good example is in Chapter 3, where cells treated with a statin drug are shown to exhibit enhanced phagocytosis of Staphylococcus aureus (p 79). Similarly, in Chapter 14, experimental data are presented on identifying Streptococcus pneumoniae proteins as candidate vaccine antigens (p 344). Additional examples are found in Chapter 5 (p 113), Chapter 6 (p 151), Chapter 11 (p 253) and Chapter 16 (p 437). In other chapters, however, these boxes either lack primary research data (p 25, p 104, p 173, and p 322) or only present information from review articles (p 25, p 279, and p 417).

The writing style is clear and succinct, with some analogies interspersed throughout. For example, the analogy of host cells and pathogens engaging in a ‘horse race’ is used several times (p 6, p 58, and p 295). Other immunology textbooks are much more comprehensive and detailed, which is perhaps better for immunology majors, graduate students, or medical students. While other summary texts do provide a more basic approach to immunology, Primer to the Immune Response provides greater breadth and relevance to current issues in health and disease in the content covered. Altogether, Primer to the Immune Response is a very easy and straightforward read. As the textbook name implies—it is an excellent first exposure to the field of immunology for novices.

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