Preface

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Recent years have seen a renewed interest in phytochemical research on plants as sources of lead compounds useful for the treatments of many pathologies.

Significant progresses of cancer chemotherapy developed targeted drugs whose specific action minimize the damage to normal cells. These medical applications make large use of derived plant natural compounds. Moreover, the research trend has shifted from chemotherapy to chemoprevention, i.e., to intervene against precancerous stages of carcinogenesis and thereby reverse tumor formation. Many chemopreventive agents have been identified and found in vegetables and fruits.

A forum for discussion of these topics, the International Symposium of the Phytochemical Society of Europe (PSE) on “Natural Products in Cancer Therapy”, was held in Naples from September 23rd to 26th 2008. The Conference has been organized by PSE in collaboration with the University of Naples “Federico II” and the University of Molise. As chairman of the organizing committee of this symposium, I have been honored and very pleased by the large participation of over 140 scientists from more than 30 countries belonging to all the five continents. During the Symposium there were 12 plenary lectures, followed by 28 oral presentations and more

than 60 posters. This offered many points of discussion providing new ideas for future collaborations on new trends in cancer therapy.

The subjects of major interest have been:

- 1) discovery of new metabolites based on new and known scaffolds, promising anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory, and anti-oxidant agents;
- 2) importance of foods of healthy Mediterranean diet (e.g., legumes, vegetable, fruits) for chemoprevention;
- 3) manipulation of biosynthetic pathway to increase the production of chosen metabolites;
- 4) combinatorial chemistry for synthetic preparation of analogues.

This volume is a special issue of *Phytochemistry Reviews* presenting a selection of 11 review papers by some of the major contributors to the symposium.

I wish to end the introduction to this work remembering, beside the scientific quality of the presentations, also the cordial and interactive atmosphere that characterized the meeting. On behalf of the organizing committee of the PSE, I thank all the participants for their contribution to the symposium success and the Springer editorial assistance for the preparation of this volume.

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