

## **THE HISTORY OF ALPHA-FETOPROTEIN DISCOVERY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

One of the first tumor markers to be described, and is still used in clinical practice today is Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP). AFP represents the most prominent oncobiomarker; widely used for the early diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma, monitoring of the tumor progression, presence of metastasis, and cancer prognosis. Until today, this protein is of great interest for study and investigation. This chapter presents historically important dates and discoveries related to the AFP.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bearing in mind that cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the world, new methods and techniques to improve early detection and treatment of cancer are constantly being investigated. In this sense, seeking and identifying molecules that could indicate the early onset of cancer and serve as tumor biomarkers is an imperative [1-7]. The aim is to identify biomarkers that indicate a change within the body, even when the tumor is very small or at an early stage, and that are useful in treatment monitoring, as well as influencing clinical response [5, 8]. To achieve all this with a single cancer biomarker is very difficult. However, contemporary possibilities are much better today than a several decades ago due to the application of new technologies [9-11].

One of the first described tumor markers, which is still used for the diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma is alpha-fetoprotein (AFP). Until now, AFP represents the most prominent oncobiomarker; widely used for the early diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma,

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