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Sommario/riassunto	Natural killer (NK) cells have been the subject of intense investigation. Only in recent years, however, could the molecular mechanisms by which they lyse tumor or virus-infected cells but spare normal cells be elucidated. NK cells express different specialized receptors (NK-R) specific for major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class I molecules. These MHC molecules exert an inhibitory effect on NK cells, i.e. lack of expression of one or more MHC class I alleles - a common event in tumor or virus-infected cells - leads to NK-mediated target cell lysis.

Recently, NK-type receptors have also been identified in a subset of T lymphocytes. MHC/NK-R interaction causes inhibition of T cell activation and functions, an observation which suggests a role for these receptors in the negative control of T cell responses. This volume offers a complete and updated review of the signal transduction and functions of NK cells, as well as their roles in transplantation, anti-tumor response and infectious diseases. Written by experienced investigators, who have contributed significantly to progress in the field, this collection of reviews will be a valuable resource for basic and clinical immunologists, hematologists, oncologists and virologists.