Acknowledgements

Although only my name appears on the cover of this thesis, a great many people have contributed to its making. I owe my gratitude to all those people who have made this dream come true and because of whom my research experience has been one that I will cherish forever.

My earnest gratitude goes to my mentor and guide, Dr M Radhakrishna Pillai, Director, Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology. I have been remarkably fortunate to have him as an advisor, who encouraged me to not only grow as an experimentalist and a researcher but also as an instructor and an independent thinker. I had the privilege to develop my own individuality and self-sufficiency by being allowed to work with independence. I consider him as one of the best teachers I have had and will always be thankful for his insightful comments, constructive criticisms, overwhelming patience, continuous encouragement and practical advice.

My clinical supervisor, Dr K Ramdas, Additional Professor and Radiation Oncologist, Regional Cancer Center, has always been a pillar of support. He has been extremely patient and understanding towards all my pestering for patient samples, numerous sittings working out medical records and educating me over practical sessions in the outpatient clinic. I am indebted to him for his selfless assistance and guidance.

I am grateful to Dr B Rajan, Director, Regional Cancer Center, for providing all facilities to carry out my research work at this prestigious institute.

I would like to acknowledge Dr Asha S Nair, Scientist E1, Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology, for boosting my confidence by providing me with words of encouragement and wisdom. I also acknowledge help and support of Dr S Lakshmi, Lecturer, Regional Cancer Center and her students Binu and Prabha.

I also appreciate the efforts of Dr E Sreekumar, Scientist B and Dr TR Santosh Kumar, Scientist B, Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology for their generous practical suggestions and help extended for invitro experiments.

I would like to thank all my friends and colleagues in person, for they were part of my extended family that helped me stay sane through these challenging years and in particular,

Senior colleagues, Dr Tessy, Dr Srinivas, Dr Bindu, Dr Thomas, Dr Priya,
Dr Divya
Friends and batchmates, Santhi, Indhu, Preethi, Reshmi, Vinitha, Santhi, Anand, Ambika, Saneesh, Shankar and Diana

Special thanks to Sreekala, for harassing me enough to finish this work with her constant prodding, Janki, for helping me days together standardizing assays, Sherin for tolerating me and my sequencing data and Ramkumar for the molecular modeling assistance.

Preetha, Darshna and Dileep for their wholehearted support required at the administrative level. Aswani for his sincere well wishes.

Ms Indu Ramachandran, Technical Officer, Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology for her help with instrumentation.

Exceptional thanks to Durga Prasad for maintaining systems of the institute and for being at everyone's beck and call, when systems go haywire.

The office and library staff of RCC and RGCB for extending all official support.

Thanks are also due, to the financial support from ICMR for funding parts of my research career.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the love and patience of my family. My parents have been a constant source of love, concern, support and strength all these years. Their encouragement and unselfish love and care for my daughters, allowed me to focus on my research. I want to thank my husband for his constant encouragement and endurance and my daughters, Anugraha and Aishwarya for their love and amazing acceptance of my inaccessibility.

Surya Ramachandran

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)