The past two decades have seen impressive advances in the management of congestive heart failure (CHF). To place this progress in perspective, this issue of the Medical Clinics of North America presents the opinions of some of the foremost experts in the world on the current therapeutic options for CHF.

In the first article, Dr. Arnold Katz provides a background for the bulk of the remaining topics in this issue. He succinctly addresses various pathophysiologic mechanisms that are modified by the various therapeutic options discussed in the articles that follow.

This article is followed by three articles that discuss what is now standard therapy in the treatment of left ventricular dysfunction. The first of these articles addresses the role of digoxin in CHF and is written by Dr. William Dec, who outlines the use of this “classic” therapy in these patients. The second article, by Dr. Philip Poole-Wilson, discusses the role of angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors—the “gold standard medication” in the management of CHF and its substitute angiotensin receptor blockers. This article is followed by Dr. John Cleland’s review of the relatively new but established indication of beta blockers. All of these therapies are now considered standard in the management of CHF.

The dismal prognosis in heart failure treatment, in spite of the above-mentioned therapeutic advances, has inspired exploration of the role of inhibition of various minor neurohormones. Dr. Arthur Feldman discusses the role of cytokines on congestive heart failure; Dr. Sanjay Rajagopalan and Dr. Bertram Pitt review the merits and future of aldosterone receptor
blockade; Thomas Luscher and colleagues discuss endothelin receptor blockades; and Dr. John Burnett and colleagues evaluate the role of natriuretic peptides.

The final section of this issue discusses the potential roles and limitations of nondigoxin inotropic agents (Drs. Kanu Chatterjee and Teresa DeMarco) and metabolic modulators (Dr. Roberto Ferrari and colleagues), electrical therapies (Dr. William Abraham), and surgical remodeling (Stephen Westaby). The final section discusses the future therapies of heart failure, including genetic editing (Drs. Roger Hajjar and Anthony Rosenzweig) and pharmacogenomics (Drs. Ragavendra Baliga and Jagat Narula).

Although significant advances have been made in the management of heart failure, the survival rate remains limited. Heart failure research is a work in progress; it is our hope that this issue will not only provide insight into the management of heart failure but will also stimulate research in this field.

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