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Fran E. Kaiser

Beyond Women’s Health: The New Discipline of Gender-Specific Medicine 917
Marianne J. Legato

At its best, women’s health is not something to be developed as an isolated discipline. If instead biologic sex is used as an important variable in research protocols, studying and comparing men and women directly, the data prompt the formulation of questions that never otherwise would be asked. In answering those questions, one can fashion more accurate and complete models not only of human physiology, but also of the pathophysiology of disease.

Multicultural Considerations in Women’s Health 939
Ana E. Nuñez and Candace Robertson

To deliver high-quality care and to be at the frontline of rectifying health care disparities, physicians need to see and understand the layers of influence that culture imparts on the lives and health of women. A strategy for gathering new data by developing conduits for population-specific data, processing these data from a culturally appropriate and patient-appropriate context, and updating information on a regular basis by community involvement is reviewed. Strategies that focus on the processes of care, such as awareness of physician-patient and family dynamics, patient access of the health care system, the development of evaluation and training tools in cross-cultural efficacy, and development of practical systems for advocacy are discussed.
Cardiovascular Risk in Women with Type 2 Diabetes
Suzanne L. Brandenburg, JoAnn Lindenfeld, Jane E.B. Reusch, and Judith G. Regensteiner

An estimated 16 million people in the United States have diabetes, 90% to 95% of whom have type 2 diabetes mellitus (DM). Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the most common cause of death in the United States, and CVD mortality is even more common in men and women with type 2 DM. In fact, 50% to 75% of people with type 2 DM die of CVD. Although the CVD mortality rate in the general population is declining, the reduction is less in individuals with type 2 DM than in nondiabetic individuals. Type 2 DM results in a greater increment in CVD risk in women than in men. The classic risk factors that accompany type 2 DM play a large part in the excess CVD mortality risk in women, yet treatment for both primary and secondary prevention of CVD in women is inadequate. Although the increased CVD risk could be due solely to a greater impact of type 2 DM on CVD risk factors in women compared with men, there may be additional independent risks associated with type 2 DM in women. An understanding of the effects of type 2 DM on CVD risk factors in women is critical if the excess mortality risk is to be minimized. This article describes the increased risk of CVD and of CVD morbidity and mortality among women with type 2 DM, explores the impact of classic and novel CVD risk factors, and summarizes therapeutic strategies in this population.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases, HIV, and AIDS in Women
Susan E. Cohn and Rebecca A. Clark

This article discusses sexually transmitted infections and the HIV epidemic among women. Although women and men with HIV generally have a similar presentation, unique manifestations among women include cervical disease caused by human papillomavirus, recalcitrant or recurrent Candida vulvovaginitis, and severe pelvic inflammatory disease. Also reviewed are HIV perinatal transmission and contraceptive or reproductive choices. Future visions include prolonged lifespan for persons with HIV as a result of the emergence of potent antiretrovirals and reduction of HIV transmission from future interventions, such as consistent use of condoms with new microbicides, vaccines, and increased use of postexposure prophylaxis.

Advances in Breast Cancer Detection and Management
Lisa A. Newman and Michael Sabel

Breast cancer detection and management have undergone dramatic changes over the past three decades. Women are increasingly diagnosed with early stage disease, leaving them with breast-conserving options versus mastectomy. Advances in the chemoprevention arena offer the promise of reduced overall breast cancer burden in the future. This article presents an overview of advances made in...
several aspects of breast cancer detection and management including screening, examination and management of the abnormal breast evaluation, breast cancer risk assessment, breast cancer risk reduction, and breast cancer treatment.

Long-Term Use of Hormone Therapy for Urogenital Complaints: Is There a Role? 1029
Susan L. Hendrix

Before the publication of the results of the Women’s Health Initiative in July of 2002, accepted practice had been the widespread use of hormone replacement therapy for menopausal symptoms. These symptoms included those related to vulvovaginal complaints with the expectation that hormone therapy had numerous benefits with very little or no risk. Although use of menopausal hormone therapy improves vaginal atrophy and its associated complaints, the benefit must be weighed against the serious risks involved with long-term use. Topical agents with little or no absorption should be used as a substitute for systemic agents thereby minimizing risk.

Osteoporosis 1039
Sue A. Brown and Clifford J. Rosen

Osteoporosis has a tremendous impact on the lives of many post-menopausal women. It is encouraging that effective treatments for this disease abound and the challenge is to ensure that those most in need of diagnosis or therapy obtain adequate care. Further research is expected to clarify the role of combination therapy or sequential use of different agents for the maximum benefit in fracture protection. There is an array of efficacious options to consider when diagnosing and treating osteoporosis so that patients and their caregivers can remain optimistic about the management of this chronic disease and prevention of future fractures.

Gonadal Steroids, Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors, and Mood Disorders in Women 1065
Ruby P. Huttner and Janet E. Shepherd

Estrogen directly influences the brain by activating estrogen receptors throughout the cerebral cortex and by enhancing serotonin activity at neuronal synapses. Although there is evidence that endogenous estrogen exerts a direct mood effect, evidence that exogenous estrogen therapy provides an antidepressant benefit remains inconclusive. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors directly affect the concentration of serotonin at neuronal receptors, even when the synapse has been altered by fluctuating or declining hormone levels, and have demonstrated efficacy for the treatment of depression in the late luteal phase, the puerperal period, and the climacteric. More specific pharmacology provides an evidence-based intervention for significant depression in women, even when associated with hormonal change.
Female Sexuality
John E. Morley and Fran E. Kaiser

Female sexuality is an extraordinarily complex process. The physician needs to be aware of the patient’s sexuality and whether or not there are sexual concerns. Physiologic changes over the lifespan can interact with sexual performance as can a variety of disease processes. Partner and relationship issues must also be taken into account. The important aspects of care consist of listening, educating, and providing support to the patient. Overall, there is a need for the development of well-organized, randomized controlled studies on appropriate assessment and intervention for sexual dysfunction in women. This article is concerned mainly with common sexual problems faced by women over the lifespan.

Alternatives to Estrogen
Lorraine A. Fitzpatrick

For many years, women have sought alternative therapies for menopausal symptoms and for general health overall. The highly publicized findings from the Women’s Health Initiative have led to an increased pressure on the medical community to find safe and alternative medications for female health. This article reviews the challenges and problems with the use of alternative medicines, and the clinical trials that prove their efficacy, and discusses the safety issues that may occur with these types of products.

Patient–Doctor Communication
Carol Teutsch

Effective patient–doctor communication is essential to providing quality patient care. This article explores components of patient–doctor communication during an office visit, examples of techniques to amplify the effectiveness of communicating with patients, and selected communication tools available to enhance the scope of the patient–doctor interaction.

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