The medical management of the surgical patient has been an important part of the repertoire of internists, family physicians, cardiologists, pulmonologists, and other medical subspecialists. Recently, hospitalists have also become involved in this area of patient care. Textbooks, articles, and courses have been focused primarily on preparing patients with medical problems or a variety of surgical procedures. This body of information addresses risk stratification, strategies for risk reduction, medication management, and some selected postoperative complications.

The information base for the management of postoperative patients is widely scattered in the medical and surgical literature and is not conveniently available. In fact, there are only two textbooks specifically focused on postoperative complications and their management. We believe that more attention needs to be focused on this area of postoperative care. Therefore, we have compiled this issue of the Medical Clinics of North America on "Postoperative Medical Complications." There are 15 articles in this issue; topics range from managing medications, evaluating abnormal postoperative laboratory tests, addressing cardiopulmonary complications, to approaching neuropsychiatric problems. Each article focuses on the time of presentation, differential diagnosis, and management strategies.

We believe that this issue will provide the reader with the most up-to-date information on the most frequently encountered postoperative medical complications. We hope, and expect, it will be useful to you in the care of your patients.