Preface

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Editor

There have been amazing advances over the last several decades in our understanding of liver disease and its treatment. In this issue of the *Medical Clinics of North America* we outline the most common diseases seen by the practicing clinician. Most liver disorders can be diagnosed by taking a meticulous history and a thorough physical examination and by recognizing the pattern of enzyme abnormalities. Second-line tests and imaging studies can then be obtained to confirm the diagnosis. This issue begins with an excellent overview by Drs Woreta and Alqahtani of the evaluation of the patient with abnormal liver tests.

Millions of persons worldwide are infected with the hepatitis C and B viruses. These patients are encountered by the clinician more frequently now than at any time in history, particularly with the influx of immigrants from countries of high endemicity. The diagnosis is crucial to optimizing patients’ survival. Treatment of these viruses has continued to evolve. The field of hepatitis C virus treatment has progressed significantly over the last decade and new direct-acting antivirals are now available for treatment. These medications can provide a cure to the hepatitis C virus–infected individual. Dr McMahon offers a complete overview of the epidemiology, diagnosis, and treatment of chronic hepatitis B virus infection.

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) has become more prevalent over the last decade and mirrors the worldwide obesity epidemic. Drs Corrado, Torres, and Harrison present these alarming facts and detail the epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and possible treatments for NAFLD. Recognizing NAFLD is essential because a portion of these patients will progress to nonalcoholic steatohepatitis with subsequent development of cirrhosis, liver cancer, end-stage liver disease, and death. As with other liver diseases, our understanding of the causes of and treatments for cholestatic and metabolic liver disease has also grown. Drs Gossard and Talwalkar discuss the diagnosis and management of the most common cholestatic liver diseases. Drs Kanwar and Kowdley present Wilson disease and hemochromatosis.

This issue of Medical Clinics of North America concludes with discussion of the complications of cirrhosis and their management. Hepatocellular carcinoma is now the sixth most prevalent cancer worldwide and the third leading cause of cancer-related death. The incidence is rising rapidly as the cirrhotic population ages. Drs Salgia...
and Singal provide a concise overview of the cause and management of this devastating cancer and other liver lesions. Dr Liou outlines the management of the most common complications of cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, and portal hypertension. We end with a discussion by Dr Fox on the topic of liver transplantation and when it should be considered for these patients.

It is an extremely exciting time for those in the field of hepatology. A better understanding of these diseases and advances in treatment allow us to offer more to these patients. I would like to thank the contributors for their outstanding contributions to the field of Hepatology and this issue. I hope you enjoy reading it and find it useful in your practice.

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