Preface

Women’s Health

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Editor

Women are complex. A woman’s health care needs change dramatically with time and life events. It is inspiring and a joy to serve as a women’s health care physician and provide guidance along this journey. Our work is challenging with continually evolving literature, data, and recommendations on clinical diagnosis, management, and screening, while taking into account essential factors of unique individual patient needs and preferences. What does “women’s health” mean? Some may define it as obstetric and gynecologic conditions and gender-specific preventive health. Comprehensive women’s health additionally includes primary care evaluation and management of acute and chronic medical conditions, risk assessment for screening all aspects of preventive health, and potential interprofessional collaboration.

While space constrains this issue from covering the myriad of classic topics in women’s health, we focus on several important themes to provide thoughtful and in-depth reviews and the latest evidence-based practice. It is an exciting time to be a women’s health provider! Even the time-honored annual health examination is changing—not going away, but focused on comprehensive preventive women’s health. The articles describe recent information, sometimes reinterpretation of older data, and controversies that inform debates and support rationale for clinical approaches, guidelines, and constantly evolving recommended practice. Selected themes include the following:

- Reproductive health and contraception: Reproductive planning is an ongoing part of care of women of child-bearing age, as their personal life and needs may often change. Primary care providers need to be comfortable with prepregnancy planning, to optimize health status and conditions prior to pregnancy. Discussion includes a few selected medical conditions impacted by pregnancy.
- Common issues affecting a woman’s quality of life: These include vulvar and vaginal conditions, sexual disorders, menopausal symptoms and changes, and osteoporosis.
Cancer screening: Critical review includes risk factors, evidence, and recommended approaches to cervical and breast cancer screening, benefits, and limitations of diagnostic testing and imaging.

Emerging gender-specific data in medical conditions: Important examples discussed are cardiovascular risk assessment and liver disease in women.

Intimate partner violence, sexual trauma, and posttraumatic stress: Personal traumas and their impact on well-being, mental health, and safety are essential issues to recognize and address in women’s health care.

Special mention is warranted of the article on “Care of Women Veterans”. Regardless of the setting and population of women we serve, increasingly, women’s health providers will be caring for Women Veterans. Department of Veterans Affairs statistics report there are over 2.2 million Women Veterans in the United States. Comprehensive Women Veterans health care requires understanding of the impact of service and unique needs of the remarkable women who have served in our military. Each Veteran has a unique history and military experience, and medical interview will aid in determining if there are special health needs and conditions that may require consultant referral.

In summary, I am proud of this Women’s Health issue and the expertise and dedication of contributing authors. Their articles help us to navigate complexities of women’s health and to expand our knowledge and insights to foster excellence in clinical care.

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