Preface

Walking the Narrow Path—Managing the Patient with Chronic Medical Illnesses

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Editor

This issue of Medical Clinics of North America covers comprehensive care of patients with chronic medical illness. Primary care physicians frequently take care of patients who have long-term, ongoing chronic medical conditions that impact the way we interpret practice guidelines, dose drugs, manage symptoms, and set goals. There are nuances in the everyday management of patients with chronic organ system dysfunction. A good example of this is in our patients with chronic renal disease, where many commonly used drugs become ineffective (ie, thiazide diuretics) or more toxic and contraindicated (bisphosphonates).

The issue covers several themes that impact the approach to primary care delivery. Articles covering the primary care of patients with major organ system dysfunction (renal, pulmonary, and liver) are included. Two articles are dedicated to covering underlying diseases (HIV and sarcoid) that can present in many ways and be perplexing to physicians responsible for ongoing care. The remainder of the issue includes articles on patient populations that carry increased risk and complexity (solid organ transplant patients, childhood cancer survivors, homeless patients, refugees, and patients with chronic alcohol misuse).

I hope that this issue will bring together expert information from multiple sources that will help in the ongoing management of these complex patients. As primary care providers, we are expected to know the obvious as well as the hidden perils our patients face. Understanding and recognizing what makes up this complexity and how we need
to individualize our management plans to account for these different risks help us walk the narrow path to providing excellent care.

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