Essentially, every biological process in the human body is regulated, at least in part, by hormones produced by the endocrine glands. The field of endocrinology is unique among the medical subspecialties because it encompasses multiple glandular organs, each with its own function, regulation, and physiology. The signals produced by these glands include peptides, steroids, neurotransmitters, and other small molecules. The endocrine system responds to external cues, such as light-dark cycles and environmental stress, as well as internal signals ranging from nutritional cues to volume status to pregnancy. An understanding of the normal function of the key parts of the endocrine system, and the care of their associated disease states, is therefore valuable for any clinician, particularly those in primary care, where endocrine disorders first manifest. Producing a collection of updates on important parts of the endocrine system by a group of recognized authorities was our goal in editing this issue of Medical Clinics of North America: Update in Endocrinology.

The topics chosen for this issue were based on the major endocrine diseases facing internists in the United States today, as well as the pattern of referrals we receive in our clinical practices. Given the growing epidemic of diabetes and obesity today, we elected to devote three articles to diabetes and obesity. These address the increasingly complex world of type 2 diabetes treatment, the incorporation of continuous glucose monitoring into diabetes management, and the rapidly evolving strategies of treating the disease of obesity. Thyroid disorders are a common problem, and one that many nonspecialists find vexing. The articles on management of thyroid nodules and the evaluation of and approach to mild thyroid function abnormalities elucidate the latest research findings and management guidelines for these conditions. In today’s world of readily available imaging studies, incidental lesions of the endocrine glands are common and require evaluation. Individual articles reviewing the evaluations of incidental adrenal and pituitary masses are also covered herein. Hyperaldosteronism is now recognized as the most common cause of secondary hypertension, and a
state-of-the-art evaluation of this condition and its pitfalls is delineated here. Hyperandrogenism in women is another frequent presentation to primary care clinicians, and a practical approach to its evaluations is included in this issue. With the aging of our population, osteoporosis is another major health concern. Its treatment options have become varied in recent years, so a review of screening and management of osteoporosis was essential and is included here. Finally, patients with elevated PTH but normal calcium concentrations are a growing portion of the referrals we see, and the article here will help clarify a confusing area of calcium metabolism.

We would like to extend our thanks to the esteemed article authors, without whose expertise and clarity this issue would not have been possible. In addition, we would like to recognize the hard work and expertise of the team at Elsevier, particularly Arlene B. Campos and Katerina Heidhausen, whose hard work made this issue possible.

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