Foreword

From One Benchmark to Another

Ever wonder how far we have come in our understanding of our patients’ clinical problems? I have. I suggest we look back to where we were when internal medicine first found its voice and was established as a discipline. I know of no better benchmark than the first textbook of internal medicine. I refer, of course, to The Principles and Practice of Medicine by arguably the father of internal medicine and indisputably the most prominent physician of his age, Sir William Osler. What did Osler have to say about endocrinology in his landmark, single-authored text, published in its first edition in 1892, nearly 130 years ago?

In fact, very little. Osler provided brief chapters on diabetes mellitus and diabetes insipidus, included in the section on Constitutional Diseases, and even briefer chapters on Addison disease and diseases of the thyroid, included in the section, Diseases of the Blood and Ductless Glands. Endocrinology was late in developing its identity as a field. Indeed, today’s Endocrine Society was called, until 1952, the Association for the Study of Internal Secretions.

Despite the late start, the field of endocrinology certainly has caught up and come a long way. If advances in the management of type 2 diabetes mellitus is an example, the progress made in the past few years is, in fact, as far reaching as it is game changing. Similar advances have been made in our approach to diseases of the thyroid, adrenal, and pituitary glands, along with our understanding of diseases of bone-mineral metabolism—all covered in this issue. “Update in Endocrinology” provides an important, modern-day benchmark for the field. If the first edition of Osler’s textbook serves as a benchmark for what endocrinology did or did not entail in the late nineteenth century, then this issue of Medical Clinics of North America serves as a benchmark for the knowledge base comprising the field today. Guest Editors, Silvio E. Inzucchi and Elizabeth H. Holt, have done a splendid job selecting the topics of greatest importance for practicing clinicians. Their authors have focused on what is impactful, evidence based, and new, and what practitioners need to know to diagnose and manage the
endocrinologic problems they will encounter in their offices. It is a fine benchmark indeed.

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