

Jorge L. Herrera, M.D., Series Editor

## Introduction to a New Series



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**M**uch has happened in the last two decades in the field of viral hepatitis. The hepatitis C virus was identified and sophisticated molecular assays have been developed to detect, quantify and characterize the hepatitis C and B viruses. For the first time we have effective therapy that can achieve a sustained remission in a substantial number of patients chronically infected with the hepatitis B or C virus and effective vaccines have been developed to prevent hepatitis A and B infection.

Despite these advances, more questions than answers remain. Hepatitis A, generally considered a fairly benign disease is now occurring more often in patients co-infected with other hepatitis viruses or in older, non-immune hosts; situations that usually give rise to severe or even fulminant liver disease. The management of hepatitis B has become complex, questions remain unanswered as to which patients benefit from therapy, which agent to use and for how long. With a rapidly expanding armamentarium for the treatment of hepatitis B, issues regarding resistance and indications for combination therapy arise in daily practice. The treatment for hepatitis C infection is effective but challenging. Individualized therapy tailored to the patient's genotype and rapidity of response to therapy allows for maximum efficacy while minimizing side effects. Aggressive management of side effects including the use of growth factors and adjunctive therapies increases the number of patients that can successfully complete therapy.

This series on Viral Hepatitis will update the reader on the latest development regarding viral hepatitis, with updates covering the five common viruses A through E, with special attention to areas of controversies and new developments.

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