



Dear Colleague:

This issue of the *Journal* contains features on the utility of one of the drugs commonly used to treat heart failure along with a variety of topics in the area of infectious disease—from HIV to causes of recurrent infection.

Digoxin and heart failure. Dr. Hobbs reviews the current place occupied by the time-honored drug digoxin in the therapeutic armamentarium for heart failure. Recent results of the DIG study indicate that digoxin improves symptoms and keeps people out of the hospital, but it doesn't reduce the mortality rate (page 234).

AIDS prevention and treatment. Dr. Kestler's fascinating discussion of a new strategy for vaccination against AIDS calls our attention to the increasing role molecular biology will play in medicine. The strategy, piloted in monkeys vaccinated with an attenuated, live simian immunodeficiency virus, protected against infection with the unmodified virus. The safety of the vaccine can be enhanced by adding a "suicide" gene, a process detailed in a color illustration that accompanies this article (page 269).

Diabetes treatment. Troglitazone is a new antidiabetic agent with a novel mechanism of action. Speerhas and Reddy provide us with a first look at how the drug can be used alone or as an adjunct to insulin in type II diabetes (page 238).

Hepatitis C. Dr. Younossi's review of chronic hepatitis C infection points out the importance of this virus in the etiology of hepatic carcinoma and notes its association with a number of other diseases as well. The

virus does not respond uniformly to treatment with interferon and evades host immune defenses by frequent mutation (page 259).

Recurrent infections. Drs. Avery and Pasternack describe how different types of recurrent infections can help unearth the diagnosis of an underlying condition (page 249).

Obesity. Rapid weight loss using a protein-sparing modified fast is an option for patients with complications of morbid obesity. Most of the allowed 800 calories per day is supplied as fish or lean meat. This undertaking is, however, not without risk and requires medical supervision, as discussed by Ms. Walters and colleagues (page 242).

The Internal Medicine Board Review this month addresses the significance of painful swallowing accompanied by various systemic symptoms in a 34-year-old woman. Drs. Kolluri and Conwell explore the evaluation and management options appropriate for this situation (page 245).

Cancer trials. Dr. Markman addresses the ethical issues that arise in considering the use of experimental drugs to treat cancer. Of particular concern is the denial of potentially effective therapy to placebo recipients during placebo-controlled trials (page 275).

As always, we are interested in learning your thoughts about the *Journal*.

JOHN D. CLOUGH, MD
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