



## Dear Colleague:

The new year begins with a spirited debate on several topics important to clinical practice. We hope this issue of the *Journal* will contribute to that debate.

### ■ Anorectic drugs and valvular heart disease (page 35)

Losing weight is not only unpleasant, but when we try to take the easy way, it may be fraught with hazard. Drs. Wong, Reddy, and Klein review the data linking the antiobesity drugs fenfluramine and dexfenfluramine with heart valve lesions and discuss the current guidelines for following these patients.

### ■ New hypertension treatment guidelines (page 18)

The Joint Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure has released new and more aggressive guidelines for blood pressure control which all physicians need to keep in mind. Dr. Gifford comments on these guidelines and gives his own perspective on aggressive treatment.

### ■ Detecting alcohol abuse in patients (page 14)

How much is too much? When it comes to alcohol, Drs. Isaacson and Collins know that it's often less than you think. A high index of suspicion can be abetted by knowledge of telltale signs of problem drinking and alcoholism, reviewed in this paper.

### ■ Screening for diabetes (page 10)

The American Diabetes Association's 1997 guidelines for diagnosing diabetes mellitus will help to uncover more cases of undiagnosed diabetes, as Dr. Reddy points out. For good measure, he includes information on new terminology and new antidiabetic drugs.

### ■ Proton-pump inhibitors (page 27)

Proton-pump inhibitors are the most effective drugs to date for the suppression of gastric acid production. Dr. Richter and Mr. Franko discuss how this class of drugs can be used, and how drugs within the class differ. A full-color illustration shows how different drugs block gastric acid secretion.

### ■ Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (page 42)

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia, the most common of the leukemias, often runs an indolent course and is discovered incidentally during a routine examination. Dr. Krauss discusses how to approach this, including complications to watch for and their treatment.

As always we are interested in what you think of the *Journal*, and your ideas for future topics.

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