

Preface



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Over the past decade, the field of hospital medicine has experienced meteoric growth and is now the predominant model of inpatient care in many hospitals across the United States. This growth has been fostered by a variety of organizational, financial, and clinical factors. One critical factor is the increasing complexity of hospitalized medical patients and the necessity of accountability for quality and efficiency of care delivery. Similar to the site-based specialties of emergency medicine and critical care, hospital medicine has emerged as a focus of practice, which over the years has defined its own set of core knowledge and core competencies. Hospitalist physicians have become leaders and scholars in a variety of domains in the inpatient setting, including patient safety, perioperative medicine, and palliative care, in addition to their traditional focus on the comprehensive medical care of hospitalized patients.

This issue of *Medical Clinics of North America* is the second dedicated to the field of hospital medicine. In the six years since the last issue, there has been rapid growth in both the number of practitioners, which now exceeds 20,000, as well as in the scope of knowledge that is required to effectively practice hospital-based medicine. This issue begins with an update on the current state of the field of hospital medicine followed by articles on core areas of hospitalist expertise, including patient safety, prevention of nosocomial infection, transitions in care, perioperative medicine, and palliative care. This issue also covers core clinical topics in the management of hospitalized patients, including pain management, geriatric care, diabetic management, life-threatening infectious diseases, and thromboembolic disease.

It concludes with a review of critical care management topics essential to non-critical care specialists. The subject matter was chosen, not so much to cover the entire body of knowledge required of hospitalists, which would be impossible in one issue, but rather to represent those areas that we feel are at the core of clinical practice and scholarship in the specialty of hospital medicine in 2008. We hope it will be valuable to hospitalists and non-hospitalists alike.

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