



NEW SERIES

Heart Failure Update

HEART FAILURE is one of the most difficult and challenging conditions for physicians to diagnose and treat—be they primary care clinicians or transplantation specialists.

Once considered simply a dropsical condition, heart failure is now recognized as a complex spectrum of disorders ranging from left ventricular systolic dysfunction to end-stage, bubbling pulmonary edema.

The aging of the US population and our success in treating acute cardiac syndromes mean that the prevalence of heart failure is increasing. Heart failure is going to be every physician's problem, regardless of specialty.

Fortunately, we are learning much about the nature and treatment of heart failure. We now know of many surgical and pharmacologic therapies that are effective—and many that are detrimental. New drugs are being developed to treat the complex alterations in the sympathetic nervous system and the renin-angiotensin system that characterize the syndrome. Unusual surgical approaches are being tested in the laboratory.

To keep you, the clinician, abreast of the rapidly expanding knowledge base and, particularly, the nuances of heart failure therapy, the *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* is presenting a series of articles dealing systematically with heart failure. The series begins this issue with an article by Randall Starling, who reviews the growing pandemic of heart failure

and the toll it will take financially and in human suffering.

Future articles in this series will include updates on:

- New types of drugs to treat heart failure, such as beta-blockers, amiodarone, and angiotensin receptor blocking agents
- Therapies for advanced, refractory heart failure
- Recent clinical trials in heart failure that have relevance to day-to-day practice
- New surgical therapies for heart failure
- Strategies to identify inadequately treated patients

We intend to present up-to-date information that is clinically useful to the clinician, as well as provocative and controversial concepts and practices. We hope that you enjoy this series, which deals with one of the most important problems of present-day medical practice.

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