

Preface

Pancreatic Diseases: Novel Mechanisms and Management



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The past 8 years have witnessed a knowledge revolution in pancreatic diseases. Much of the credit goes to the Human Genome Project, which catalyzed the development of new genetic tools and fundamental information about the human genetic code. It also permitted the discovery of the genetic basis or susceptibility to many diseases. Many of the advances involving pancreatic disease that are detailed in this issue were organized and presented in preliminary form at the Fourth International Symposium on Inherited Diseases of the Pancreas, a 2-day conference held in Chicago, in November, 2003, and sponsored jointly by the Midwest Multi-center Pancreatic Study Group and the American Pancreatic Association. One of the benefits of this line of research is the fact that many of the arcane observations regarding the rare genetic disorders have helped to elucidate the pathogenesis of much more common diseases of the pancreas for which, until recently, there has been little advancement.

This issues of *Gastroenterology Clinics of North America* is filled with practical information about unusual and common diseases of the pancreas, with a major focus on the clinical aspects of acute pancreatitis (early factors, clinical predictors, and therapy), genetic factors leading to chronic pancreatitis (including the cationic trypsinogen genes PRSS1, SPINK1, and CFTR), new animal models that provide insight into human disease, genetic mechanism in pancreatic cancer, and issues relevant to genetic

counseling. Finally, information related to the evaluation of cystic lesions of the pancreas (including early diagnosis of malignancy) has been included. Together, this issue represents the most important and up-to-date information on new aspects of pancreatic diseases that the editors could assemble.

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