Acute and chronic viral hepatitis infections are serious public health threats around the world. The different infections have different epidemiology and natural histories, and children play important roles in each of these. For example, children are important reservoirs for acute hepatitis A, childhood infections are responsible for most of the global morbidity associated with chronic hepatitis B, and perinatal transmission of hepatitis C continues to occur, even as the overall incidence of new infections wanes. Some non-A through E viral hepatitis infections are seen predominantly in infants and young children, while others have specific implications for this population. Therapeutic options for children with chronic viral hepatitis are limited when compared to those available for adults, especially for hepatitis B, and considerations given to long-term therapy have dramatic implications when dealing with the long life expectancy of these young patients.

With these issues in mind, this unique volume has been created to address the special considerations regarding viral hepatitis in children. It includes the latest information and recommendations specifically directed at the pediatric population, and highlights the knowledge gaps which will need to be filled to improve our understanding of these infections and treatment of this special group. Experienced practitioners from around the world have contributed these reviews, incorporating the latest studies, the current recommendations, and the distinctive pediatric issues that shape clinical care, and will determine the research agenda for this field going forward. There is a chapter dedicated only to immunoprophylaxis, emphasizing the critical nature of this aspect of care in the important goals of control and eventual eradication of some of these infections. Another chapter is aimed specifically at the primary care issues that arise during evaluation and management of infants and children who are at risk for or affected by viral hepatitis. It is hoped that this work will be a valuable resource for pediatricians, pediatric gastroenterologists, and hepatologists and infectious disease specialists who may care for children with viral hepatitis.

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