I am pleased to serve as the guest editor of this issue of Pediatric Annals, which focuses on pediatric hepatology. Pediatric liver diseases are not very common, and many pediatric residency programs do not have certified hepatologists on the faculty team, which may affect the comfort level pediatricians have with taking care of children with liver diseases. In the articles presented here, we seek to highlight the different liver diseases that could be encountered in the general pediatric world, as well as liver transplantation—when it becomes the only treatment option to cure the liver disease.

In the first article, “Cholestasis in Infancy,” Dr. Melissa G. Andrianov and I review the evaluation process of infants with cholestatic liver diseases. We discuss the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition guidelines for evaluating infants with hyperbilirubinemia, and focus on the prompt evaluation, diagnosis, and timely intervention to improve clinical outcomes, especially upon evaluating obstructive biliary diseases like biliary atresia.

In the second article, “Viral Hepatitis in Children: A Through E,” Drs. Ankur Chugh, Maryann Maximos, Meryl Perlman, and Regino P. Gonzalez-Peralta review the main childhood viral hepatidites; namely, types A, B, C, D, and E. They describe the chief characteristics of each virus, along with epidemiology, clinical features, and diagnosis. They also provide an update on available therapies and ongoing clinical trials for therapeutic agents for both hepatitis B and C.

In the third article, “An Overview of Cirrhosis in Children,” Drs. Jonathan Cordova, Hilary Jericho, and I present an illustrative case review of a teenager with chronic jaundice who was ultimately diagnosed with cirrhosis due to autoimmune hepatitis. We explore theoretical and clinical aspects of cirrhosis as they pertain to the pediatric population, and underscore the importance of recognizing the clinical signs of chronic liver disease, as well as the effect liver disease may impose on the different organ systems in the body.

In the fourth article, “Acute Liver Failure,” Dr. Catherine D. Newland provides an updated review on pediatric acute liver failure (PALF). She discusses the various etiologies in different pediatric age groups, findings on initial presentation that could be subtle, as well as different potential complications and organ system involvement in PALF. She highlights the importance of prompt referral to critical care liver transplant centers equipped to manage children with liver failure.

In the final article, “Pediatric Liver Transplantation: An Update for the Pediatrician,” Drs. Kristin Capone, Karine Amirikian, and I discuss the different aspects of pediatric liver transplantation including the evaluation process, listing for transplantation, and the care of the patient undergoing transplantation at the different timelines—pre- and posttransplant. The general practitioner is a valued member in the multidisciplinary team who care for children in need of liver transplantation. Being familiar with the expectations and needs of those children will ensure timely referral, and strong support during pretransplant and through recovery and the variable stages of growth and development.

I send a special thank you to all of the contributors; this issue would not have been possible without their help, commitment, and expertise in subspecialty fields. I am indebted to this journal’s editor-in-chief, Dr. Joseph R. Hageman, for extending the opportunity to me to work on this project. It is my hope that these articles provide an interesting and valuable overview of different topics in pediatric hepatology.

Disclosure: Ruba K. Azzam discloses grants and personal fees received from Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
doi: 10.3928/19382359-20161116-01
Rubia K. Azzam, MD, is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics in the Section of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at The University of Chicago. She is the Director of Pediatric Hepatology and the Medical Director of Pediatric Liver Transplantation. She obtained her medical degree at the University of Jordan. She completed her pediatric residency at the University of Wisconsin, and her fellowship training at Children’s Memorial Hospital, Northwestern University in Chicago, IL.

Dr. Azzam enjoys the challenge of caring for children with hepatobiliary and general gastrointestinal diseases. Her main interest is in the management of chronic liver diseases and optimization of care pre- and post-liver transplantation.

Address correspondence to Ruba K. Azzam, MD, via email: razzam@peds.bsd.uchicago.edu.