The adolescent years can be a challenging time to navigate for patients, parents, and providers. Just as teen bodies are changing through puberty, their social worlds start to have shifting importance toward relationships. Indeed, the adolescent years are a time of great sexual and reproductive health risk but also a time of great opportunity. In this collection of articles, we review emerging issues in adolescent sexual and reproductive health. We aim to arm primary care providers to support teens and their families through some of the complex sexual and reproductive health issues that they may face and to provide preventive measures to protect them from risk.

Sexual violence is, unfortunately, a more widespread occurrence in adolescence than previously realized, and adolescents with disabilities are especially at risk. In our lead article entitled “Sexual Violence in Adolescents,” Dr. Jennifer L. Northridge provides an overview of the scope of this issue as well specific screening recommendations for adolescent sexual assault, intimate partner violence, reproductive coercion, and sex trafficking. To further empower primary care providers in caring for these victims, Dr. Northridge reviews sexual assault management and shares national mental health resources.

In 2018, the American Academy of Pediatrics shared a policy statement, “Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents.” The statement highlighted the importance of preparing primary care providers to identify and support transgender children, a group with several health disparities. In our second article, “The Reproductive Health Care of Transgender Young People: A Guide for Primary Care Providers,” Drs. Nancy A. Dodson and Miriam Langer build on this policy statement and review a general approach to transgender children with a focus on meeting their often unmet sexual and reproductive health care needs. The authors provide an overview of the role of gender-affirming hormones, menstrual suppression, contraception counseling, sexually transmitted infection screening, and fertility counseling and preservation options.

The last three articles examine preventive measures and counseling paradigms that are ever important in informing and safeguarding an adolescent’s sexual and reproductive health. Dr. Paula K. Braverman, in her article entitled “HPV Vaccine in Adolescents,” reviews the epidemiology of the most common sexually transmitted infection in adolescents—the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is known to cause anogenital cancers, genital warts, and recurrent respiratory papillomatosis. Dr. Braverman provides updates on the national efforts on primary prevention through HPV vaccine uptake; although rates are increasing, there is room for improvement, making this a salient read for primary care providers. Lastly, she reminds us that because higher titers were found at younger ages, starting in 2016, two rather than three doses of HPV vaccine are recommended if the first dose is given prior to age 15 years.

Although rates of contraception use have been increasing, almost 80% of adolescent pregnancies are unintended. A 2017 national survey of high school students found that about 40% are sexually active and only one-third reported use of an effective method of contraception, either long-term reversible contraception or shorter-term hormonal contraception. In the article, “Contraceptive Needs of Adolescents with Chronic Illness,” Drs. Nadia Scott and Sofya Maslyanskaya remind us that adolescents with medical conditions have equal or higher rates of sexual activity and unintended pregnancy risk as their healthy counterparts. Furthermore, contraception counseling for these youth must also address interactions with medications, risks and side effects of contraception, and particular dangers of unplanned pregnancies based on disease states. Their article reviews contraception counseling for adolescents with chronic medical con-
ditions using a case-based approach and they highlight the most up-to-date Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

In the final article, “Fertility Counseling for Adolescents,” Dr. Rashmi Kudesia, who is a reproductive endocrinologist and infertility specialist (REI), and I share with you an often neglected aspect of routine reproductive health in adolescents. We review the normal menstrual cycle in adolescents as well as basic aspects of fertility awareness counseling. Fertility counseling is particularly important for adolescents with chronic medical conditions, certain gynecologic conditions, or history of potentially fertility-impacting therapies. We outline when a more detailed conversation may be warranted, either by referral to adolescent medicine or a REI specialist. Lastly, we provide a guide to help offer this counseling at preventive health visits and we also suggest including these conversations as a part of the transitioning process to adult care, if not done earlier.

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About the Guest Editor

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Dr. Talib, a Brown University summa cum laude graduate, earned her Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience. She attended medical school at Weill Cornell Medical College, where she served as vice president of her class. She completed her Pediatrics Residency at New York Presbyterian-Weill Cornell and her Chief Residency in Pediatrics at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

In addition to providing outpatient subspecialty care at CHAM, Dr. Talib also cares for youth in foster care at the Children’s Aid Society’s Bronx Family Health Center. Her clinical interests include adolescent health, pediatric and adolescent gynecology, contraception, mental health, care of children in foster care, and care of the hospitalized adolescent.

Dr. Talib is board certified in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and a member of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) and the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology (NASPAG). She serves as Associate Editor of the Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology, the official journal of NASPAG, and as a co-chair of the NASPAG resident education committee. In addition, Dr. Talib is a past President of the Executive Board of the New York chapter of SAHM.

Dr. Talib has several research interests. She has published studies in areas of HIV testing in adolescents, treatment of vitamin D deficiency in adolescents, and protecting adolescent patients’ confidentiality in inpatient settings. Most recently, her research interests include fertility counseling needs and experiences in adolescent girls and she is working on publications comparing provision of such counseling across age groups, demographics, and medical diagnoses.

Through her work with NASPAG, Dr. Talib is active in educational scholarship and has published teaching curricula on pediatric and adolescent gynecology as well as studies examining their effectiveness. In 2018, Dr. Talib published her first book, Adolescent Gynecology: A Clinical Casebook.

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