Preface

Alcohol and Alcoholic Liver Disease

It’s a great advantage not to drink among hard drinking people.
— F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby

Welcome to this issue of Clinics in Liver Disease, an issue devoted to alcohol. Alcohol was the first agent recognized as a cause of liver disease, and it remains synonymous with cirrhosis to the lay public. Alcohol has been touted as a panacea and reviled as a social and medical menace. It has been an important factor in medicine since Hippocratic times; a Medline search for “alcohol and liver disease” identified almost 37,000 citations from 1946 to 2018. The ill effects of alcohol extend beyond the liver, but we have taken a fairly liver-focused view: this is Clinics in LIVER Disease, after all.

We enjoyed the opportunity to assemble a talented and enthusiastic group of authors who contributed a total of 13 articles. Our hope was to highlight important issues and stimulate discussion on the place of alcohol in contemporary medicine. We start with an unusual nonmedical topic, a history of alcohol in ancient and modern civilizations. We then move on to a wide range of issues that confront practitioners who deal with alcohol-related problems. The subsequent articles include pathology, legal issues, epidemiology and population health, pediatric issues, alcohol use disorder, genetics, acute alcoholic hepatitis, nutrition, cirrhosis, alcohol-related diseases of the central nervous system, and potential future therapies that may emerge from studies in nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. We hope that students and professionals who study alcoholic liver disease will find useful opinions and challenging ideas in the pages of this issue.

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