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FAMILY PRACTICE BOARD REVIEW MANUAL

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Left Ventricular Systolic Dysfunction and Other Types of Heart Failure

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INTRODUCTION

Heart failure (HF) is the only major cardiovascular disorder that is increasing in incidence and prevalence in the United States, despite advances in medical therapeutics and procedures. HF is responsible for more than 11 million visits to physicians' offices annually in this country and contributes to over 3.5 million hospitalizations per year. In fact, HF is the leading cause of hospitalizations for people in the United States older than 65 years.¹ It is estimated that 4.8 million Americans have HF, with 400,000 to 700,000 new cases diagnosed each year.² The cost to hospitalize patients with HF in the United States surpasses \$52 billion annually.³

In the daily performance of their specialty, family physicians frequently encounter clinical situations in which they are called on either to diagnose HF and initiate therapy or to continue treatment of patients with known HF. To assist physicians with this increasingly frequent but sometimes daunting task, the following article will provide updated information on HF, focusing on left ventricular systolic dysfunction (LVSD). The definition, etiology, and potential complications of HF will be presented as will essential components of the diagnostic work-up of patients suspected of or confirmed as having the disorder. Appropriate pharmacologic and nonpharmacologic management will be reviewed, and the improving prognosis of HF will be discussed.