

Preface

OUR INTENT IN ASSEMBLING THIS COLLECTION OF papers is to shine a light on two fascinating enteric hepatitis viruses that for many years have received much less attention from research agencies than other viruses considered to cause “neglected” diseases, such as dengue and Zika virus. Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is ancient, well known to the medical community for decades but only recently giving up some long-held secrets, while hepatitis E virus (HEV) is a relative newcomer with many unanswered fundamental questions concerning its ecology and biology. Chapters in this volume describe the shifting global health impact of HAV and HEV infections, and the current status of vaccines that have the demonstrated potential to significantly reduce the transmission of viruses that still infect millions of people each year. Despite the low research priority often accorded these two viruses, there has also been tremendous recent progress in understanding their host–virus relationships. These exciting advances are highlighted in several chapters that define the unusual dual lifestyle of HAV and HEV as quasi-enveloped viruses, as well as new concepts in mechanisms of liver disease and control of infection by the host immune system.

As editors, we are grateful to the authors of the papers included in this collection, each of whom has taken precious time from their professional pursuits and personal lives to contribute to this volume. We are grateful also to the many, many dedicated physicians, epidemiologists, virologists, immunologists, and other scientists whose past and current efforts have built the foundation of knowledge upon which these papers rest. For us personally, it has been both a pleasure and an inspiration to review many of the early contributions to this field from the first half of the twentieth century, and to see how much was learned with such limited research tools at hand. We thank also Richard Sever, who first suggested this collection, and Barbara Acosta and Diane Schubach of the Cold Spring Harbor Press, who made numerous helpful suggestions and who worked tirelessly to make it happen.

Lastly, but certainly far from least, we thank Penney and Della, our life partners and best friends, for their support and encouragement, and mostly muted complaints of time taken from more important family matters to pursue what must have seemed at times both an arcane and pedantic effort.

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