



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

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New Interactive Tools from ACG Aim to Bring Hope to Millions of IBS Patients Searching for Relief

*IBS Signs and Symptoms Tracker Sheds Light on IBS Warning Signs;
IBS Treatment Matrix Helps Patients Find Relief*

(Bethesda, Maryland – May 29, 2009) – To mark World Digestive Health Day, the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG), in conjunction with global observances of this awareness day under the auspices of the World Gastroenterology Organisation (WGO), today announced the availability of two new interactive tools aimed at helping to provide answers and hope to millions of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) sufferers struggling for relief. The first tool – also called “The IBS Test” - is intended to help undiagnosed individuals recognize the signs and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). The second – called the “IBS Treatment Matrix” – is based on newly published ACG data analyzing IBS treatment options and offers basic information as well as graded recommendations on sixteen categories of IBS therapies. Both tools are available for free at www.ibsrelief.org.

In the United States, it is estimated that 10-15 percent of the adult population suffers from IBS symptoms, yet only 5 to 7 percent of adults have been diagnosed with the disease. IBS is the most common disease diagnosed by gastroenterologists and one of the most common disorders seen by primary care physicians. According to studies, IBS patients make more visits to their physicians, undergo more diagnostic tests, are prescribed more medications, miss more workdays, have lower work productivity, are hospitalized more frequently, and account for greater overall direct healthcare costs than patients without IBS. ACG's new research reveals that IBS can have such a severe impact on Health-Related Quality of Life that it has been linked to an increase in suicidal behavior.

The IBS Treatment Matrix for patients was built based on new ACG research published in the January 2009 issue of *The American Journal of Gastroenterology*, offering graded recommendations on the full range of options for testing and treatment of IBS. The study, which addresses everything from new IBS drugs to alternative therapies including psychotherapy and acupuncture, provides expert assessments based on a thorough evaluation of the evidence surrounding each therapy.

“So many of the IBS patients that I see are frustrated, confused and just plain miserable - as treatments and treatment combinations wreak havoc, don't work, work intermittently or cause side effects perceived as worsening IBS symptoms,” said Eamonn M.M. Quigley, M.D., FACG, a gastroenterologist and one of the authors of ACG's Evidence-Based Recommendations. “Our aim with the evidence-based recommendations, and in launching this tool, is to help guide patients and their doctors through the maze of potential treatment options and to give them hope that relief is possible.”

About the Tools

Over the last 20 years, a number of scientific studies have demonstrated that people with IBS tend to have higher levels of sensitivity in the intestines compared to individuals who do not have IBS. **The IBS Test** interactive tool allows individuals to quickly distinguish whether they are experiencing the most common symptoms associated with IBS through a series of easy-to-answer questions. Capturing this data enables a patient to have a more comprehensive conversation with their doctor concerning their unique symptoms.

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Once diagnosed, IBS can still be extremely challenging to treat. There are many treatment options to consider – from therapies which act on bowel symptoms to new agents and alternatives including antidepressants, antibiotics and even probiotics.

The IBS Treatment Matrix provides an at-a-glance overview of all currently available IBS treatment options, plus evidence supporting the safety and efficacy of those options, enabling IBS patients and their physicians to consider all the possible alternatives while formulating a treatment plan. There are a staggering number of choices for patients and physicians, and the IBS Treatment Matrix presents the evidence on those proven to be effective at improving the overall symptoms of IBS in well-designed clinical trials. Both tools are available for free at www.ibsrelief.org.

“This year’s focus for World Digestive Health Day is to bring more appreciation and understanding to IBS, this challenging condition that affects the quality of life for millions of people around the world,” said Dr. Quigley, who serves both as President of the World Gastroenterology Organisation and as President of the American College of Gastroenterology. “IBS symptoms are often overlooked. And there are few remedies that improve the global symptoms of IBS, making it difficult to treat with any one approach. By providing these new online tools we are encouraging patients to recognize the signs and symptoms of IBS and to take them seriously, and to talk to their doctor about all the treatment options available to address their condition.”

About IBS:

IBS is a chronic functional gastrointestinal disorder which for many sufferers is marked by abdominal discomfort, bloating, constipation and/or diarrhea and can be categorized based on these symptoms: IBS-D is accompanied by diarrhea, IBS-C is accompanied by constipation and IBS-M includes both diarrhea and constipation. Contrary to popular belief, IBS is not a psychosomatic disorder. Stress and anxiety do not cause IBS. Instead, research suggests that IBS is caused by changes in the nerves and muscles that control sensation and motility of the bowel. IBS is 1.5 times more common in women than in men and is most commonly diagnosed in people under the age of 50.

About the American College of Gastroenterology

Founded in 1932, the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) is an organization with an international membership of more than 10,000 individuals from 80 countries. The College is committed to serving the clinically oriented digestive disease specialist through its emphasis on scholarly practice, teaching and research. The mission of the College is to serve the evolving needs of physicians in the delivery of high quality, scientifically sound, humanistic, ethical, and cost-effective health care to gastroenterology patients.

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