



Preface

Inflammatory bowel disease



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Guest Editor

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are chronic, relapsing, and remitting diseases that are the major forms of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The peak age of onset of these diseases is between the first and fourth decades of life with a prevalence of 100 to 200 per 100,000 in Europe and North America. IBD accounts for significant morbidity in developing countries and is responsible for nearly \$2.0 billion in annual medical costs in the United States.

This issue of the *Gastroenterology Clinics of North America* covers a spectrum of topics relevant to IBD. A group of internationally renowned clinical investigators have been assembled to provide an evidenced-based review of IBD. Where research or data are lacking, the authors provide insight and information from clinical experience. The issue is intended to serve as an overview of IBD and provides an update on new scientific discoveries, a review of the pathophysiology of these diseases, and clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and management of patients with IBD. This issue is divided into four sections that review the epidemiology and pathogenesis, diagnosis, treatment, and special presentations and populations of IBD.

The first section reviews the epidemiology and pathogenesis of inflammatory bowel disease. The section begins with an overview of the descriptive epidemiology of ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. The pathogenic factors related to inflammatory bowel disease are next covered in four separate

articles. There is an article that summarizes the extensive research on the complex interactions between the environment and IBD. Another article reviews the data implicating microbial factors in IBD and the results of clinical trials evaluating therapeutic manipulation of intestinal flora. The next article outlines the substantial evidence that complex genetics are involved in the pathogenesis of IBD and presents a summary of the data on the newly discovered Crohn's disease-associated gene. The last article in this section provides an overview of the mucosal immune system and its relevance to the development of new therapies for ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

The second section reviews the current modalities available for diagnosing IBD and includes three articles on radiographic imaging, endoscopy, and pathology. The article on radiographic imaging provides an overview of imaging studies available to confirm and differentiate Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, and outlines the importance of these tests to assess for complications and monitor response to therapy. The article on endoscopy reviews the role of endoscopic procedures in diagnosing IBD, managing complications, and surveillance for cancer. The last article in this section summarizes the current understanding of IBD pathology and serologic markers, and addresses the early pathologic features of ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.

The third section reviews the medical, nutritional, and surgical treatment of IBD. The first two articles in this section outline the medications currently available for the treatment of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and provides information on mechanism of action, clinical efficacy, and drug toxicity. The next article offers treatment strategies of specific clinical presentations in IBD. Another article reviews nutritional factors in the pathogenesis and treatment of IBD. The final two articles in this section summarize the surgical approaches and indications for patients with ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.

The fourth section reviews special populations and presentations of IBD. The first article in this section provides an evidence-based analysis and approach to surveillance of cancer in IBD. The next two articles focus on the unique aspects of IBD in the pregnant and pediatric patient and provide treatment strategies for these two groups. The next article reviews the atypical colitides and discusses pathogenesis and current therapeutic options. There is an article that summarizes the extraintestinal manifestations of IBD and reviews the immunologic aspects and available treatment. Hepatobiliary diseases associated with IBD are reviewed and treatment strategies discussed. Finally, the concurrence of functional bowel disorders with IBD is reviewed and possible pathogenic associations summarized.

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