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Summary

IBD patient in remission: Are IBS-like symptoms IBS or still IBD?

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IBD | Primary Care

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This debate presentation examined whether IBS-like symptoms in IBD patients in remission represent true IBS or residual inflammation, with speakers concluding that both gut-brain interactions and depth of remission definition are important considerations.

KEY POINTS

- The speakers stated that as IBD remission definitions have evolved beyond symptoms to include endoscopic and histological healing, the prevalence of IBS-like symptoms in remission has decreased but remains substantial, reported as approximately 18-25% depending on remission criteria used.
- According to the presenters, anxiety and depression are main drivers of IBS-like symptoms in IBD patients in remission, with studies showing these symptoms closely related to psychological distress, female gender, and visceral hypersensitivity rather than mucosal immune activation.
- The speakers reported that gut-brain interactions occur in IBD through mechanisms including vagal nerve signaling and systemic cytokines, with animal models showing choroid plexus changes during intestinal inflammation.
- One speaker stated that 95.6% of Crohn's disease patients achieving transmural healing (defined as bowel wall thickness less than 3 millimeters) are in remission with very few reporting symptoms.
- Both speakers recommended that if active inflammation is carefully ruled out using non-invasive monitoring tools like fecal calprotectin and intestinal ultrasound, patients with persistent IBS-like symptoms should be treated with IBS therapies such as antispasmodics, dietary interventions including low FODMAP diet, and neuromodulators rather than anti-inflammatory drugs to avoid overtreatment.

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