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Summary

Is nutrition the missing link in long-term IBD management?

Charlie W. Lees

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Surgery | Small Intestine & Nutrition | IBD

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The Predict study of 2500 IBD patients in remission followed for a median of four years found almost all dietary factors showed no association with disease flare except meat intake, which was robustly associated with approximately doubled flare risk in ulcerative colitis, while the speaker argues Mediterranean diet's main value in IBD lies in reducing long-term cardiovascular, cancer, and mortality risks rather than controlling intestinal inflammation.

KEY POINTS

- The study found no association between ultra-processed foods, dietary fibre, or alcohol and IBD flares, with meat intake (red and white) being the only dietary factor significantly associated with flares in ulcerative colitis patients with a hazard ratio of about two.
- Objective flares (defined by inflammation increases and therapy changes) occurred at 6-7% per year reaching 14% at two years, while one-third of patients reported anxiety, one-fifth had depression, and depression plus reduced exercise were associated with objective flares in ulcerative colitis.
- The speaker states that evidence from non-IBD populations shows Mediterranean diet reduces major cardiovascular events by up to one-third, which is relevant because IBD-related chronic inflammation increases long-term risk of heart disease, cancer, kidney disease, and death.
- The speaker recommends Mediterranean diet (more vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts, olive oil, fish; less red meat, processed meat, sugary drinks, ultra-processed foods) as a default for IBD patients primarily to improve healthspan and reduce non-intestinal complications over a lifetime with the disease.

- The speaker emphasizes that controlling IBD inflammation requires drugs as the mainstay, stating current biologics and small molecules are working very well and newer agents continue to improve upon therapeutic ceilings previously seen with older therapies.
- The speaker advocates for brief clinical questioning about diet, sleep, energy, and mood at each visit and calls for policy-level changes to food supply systems, citing South American countries like Chile as leading examples of regulatory reform.

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