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Summary

Food intolerance and allergy testing

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Gut Microbiota | Small Intestine & Nutrition

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The speaker presented an educational overview of adverse food reactions, distinguishing immune-mediated allergies from non-immune intolerances, and cautioned against unvalidated IgG food tests while highlighting the emerging alpha-gal syndrome and the significant role of patient expectancy in self-reported food intolerance.

KEY POINTS

- The speaker stated that IgG-based food allergy tests are unvalidated and only detect prior exposure, not true allergy, and should not be used in clinical practice.
- Alpha-gal syndrome, transmitted by tick bites, causes delayed allergic reactions to red meat occurring 2 to 6 hours after ingestion; the speaker noted a study reporting 35% of forest workers in Baden-Württemberg tested positive for alpha-gal antibodies.
- A study presented by the speaker showed that patients with self-reported gluten intolerance experienced the highest symptoms when they expected and received gluten, while those who received gluten without expecting it had the lowest symptoms, demonstrating the role of expectancy.
- The speaker reported that even after being shown evidence that symptoms were expectancy-based rather than gluten-related, patients maintained their gluten-free diets six months later.
- Mast cell activation syndrome has two conflicting consensus definitions, and the speaker advised gastroenterologists not to engage in this diagnosis.
- The speaker recommended referring patients with suspected IgE-mediated food allergies to allergy specialists for validated testing including oral food challenge, skin prick tests, and specific IgE testing, rather than attempting diagnosis independently.

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