SIBO AND IMO IN IBS: THE PREVALENCE DEPENDS ON THE SUBSTRATE USED AND THE CUT-OFF VALUES OF BREATH TESTS

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In a retrospective study of 287 IBS patients, lactulose breath testing yielded approximately 10 times more positive results for SIBO diagnosis than glucose breath testing (47% vs 4.5% at the +20 ppm hydrogen cutoff), with no correlation between test positivity and symptoms.

KEY POINTS

- Among 155 glucose and 132 lactulose breath tests in Rome IV-diagnosed IBS patients (71% women, mean age 45), lactulose testing was positive for SIBO in 47% of patients using the +20 ppm hydrogen rise cutoff compared to only 4.5% with glucose testing (p=0.0001).
- Both breath test substrates showed similar rates of methane positivity for intestinal methanogen overgrowth diagnosis (34% for both glucose and lactulose), with methane levels inversely correlated with diarrhea symptoms (p<0.04).
- Neither breath test substrate showed significant association between SIBO or IMO positivity and IBS symptom severity, anxiety, or depression, regardless of cutoff values used.
- The authors conclude that the very high positivity rate with lactulose testing may not be acceptable for SIBO diagnosis in IBS, and that the clinical significance of breath test-diagnosed SIBO and IMO in IBS patients requires validation through prospective interventional studies.

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