

The irritating world of Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Understanding, identifying and treating IBS



Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a chronic gastrointestinal condition that affects the large intestine, causing frequent occurrences of abdominal pain, cramps, bloating, flatulence, diarrhoea, and, or, constipation, Fibromyalgia, anxiety and sleep disturbance.

While it is now recognised by healthcare professionals the world over that the condition is caused by an imbalance in the gut microbiomes, until recently, there was no specific test to diagnose IBS. So, doctors usually relied on the patient's medical history, physical examination, endoscopy, and colonoscopy to rule out other diseases or conditions, before diagnosing IBS.

Despite its prevalence, the diagnosis and treatment of IBS remain challenging, often leaving patients frustrated, and healthcare professionals searching for better solutions. Under the circumstances, there is a great need for a more comprehensive understanding of the condition and a patient-centric approach to its treatment.

The complexity of IBS diagnosis

One of the primary shortcomings of IBS diagnosis is its complexity. IBS is often considered a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that other gastrointestinal conditions must first be ruled out before a positive IBS diagnosis can be made. This process can be time-consuming, expensive, and emotionally taxing for patients. Misdiagnoses and delayed diagnoses are common, leading to unnecessary medical tests and treatments.

Additionally, there is no definitive biomarker or imaging test to confirm IBS, making it a subjective diagnosis based on symptoms. This subjectivity can lead to overdiagnosis or underdiagnosis, further complicating patient care.

Inadequate symptom management

Present-day treatments for IBS primarily focus on symptom management rather than addressing the underlying causes of the condition. Patients are often prescribed medications such as antispasmodics, laxatives, and anti-diarrheal drugs to alleviate their symptoms, but these drugs do not provide long-term relief or address the root causes of IBS.

Moreover, dietary and lifestyle modifications are commonly recommended, but these approaches can be overwhelming for patients, and compliance is often low. Many individuals find it challenging to identify specific trigger foods or make significant dietary changes, leading to frustration and minimal symptom improvement.

Lack of personalized treatment

The one-size-fits-all approach to IBS treatment is another major shortcoming. Each patient's experience of IBS is unique, with varying symptoms and triggers. However, present-day treatments often fail to consider individual differences and preferences. This lack of personalized medicine means that many patients do not receive the most effective treatment for their specific condition.

Limited focus on gut-brain interaction

Growing evidence suggests that the gut-brain axis plays a significant role in IBS. Stress, anxiety, and other emotional factors can exacerbate IBS symptoms, yet mental health aspects are often overlooked in treatment plans. The current approach tends to address physical symptoms without adequately addressing the emotional and psychological factors that can contribute to IBS.

The role of the microbiome

The gut microbiome, the complex community of microorganisms living in the intestines, has gained increasing attention in recent years for its role in IBS. Research has revealed that a microbiome imbalance can contribute to IBS symptoms, but present-day diagnostic methods do not routinely assess the microbiome. Treatment options that target the microbiome, such as probiotics and dietary interventions, remain underexplored in mainstream IBS management.

Limited access to specialized care

Not all healthcare providers are equally knowledgeable about IBS, leading to inconsistent care quality. Many patients struggle to access specialized care from gastroenterologists or dietitians who have expertise in managing IBS. This limitation can result in mismanagement and frustration for patients seeking relief.

Iom Bioworks

Iom Bioworks is addressing IBS through an innovative approach centred around the microbiome. We use extensive data, advanced mathematical models, deep learning frameworks, and ground-breaking biological AI to create models of interactions between hosts and bacteria. By combining this expertise with the wisdom of traditional diets, our scientists assist doctors in creating highly personalized plans, aimed at optimizing individual performance. GutHealth is the first-of-its-kind product that will put your gut bacteria under the microscope, understand what it comprises, find its unique triggers and find solutions that will impact your digestive health, positively.