

Who are we?

Leading researchers and expert clinicians promoting research and advancing the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) throughout Europe. We have formed an international network supported by the *European Society of Neurogastroenterology and Motility* (ESNM).

What is IBS?

IBS is a frequent disorder, affecting 10–15% of the population. The most common IBS symptoms include cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, and gas. Changes in bowel habits also occur—either loose and frequent stools, hard and infrequent stools, or mixed bowel habits. Often, IBS goes along with anxiety and depression as well as pain syndromes and fatigue (Figure 1). Currently the diagnosis of IBS is purely clinical and based upon a characteristic set of symptoms. However, patients repeatedly undergo a variety of tests that are often invasive and that fail to show any abnormality. This is a highly frustrating outcome for patients and doctors alike.

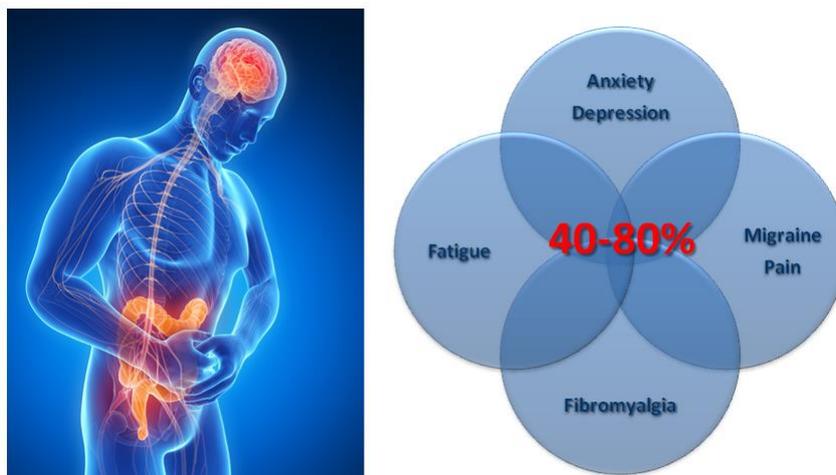


Figure 1. 40-80% of IBS patients suffer from one or more of the following disorders: psychiatric diseases (anxiety, depression), chronic fatigue or pain conditions (migraine, fibromyalgia)

What are the currently known mechanisms involved in IBS?

The current factors suspected of being involved in IBS include: genetics, bacteria in the digestive system, lifestyle, stress and other psychological factors, infections of the gut, environmental factors, and food intake (Figure 2). During the last couple of years, disturbances in communication between the little brain in the gut and the brain via the so called *gut-brain axis*, has impaired function of nerve cells in the gut and the brain, disrupted the gut lining, and caused disturbances in the immune

system of the gut. However, the causes and consequences are still poorly understood.



Figure 2. Summary of factors influencing the manifestation of IBS: lifestyle: diet/smoking, bacterial infection, stress/trauma, female gender, genes

What is urgently needed for IBS?

IBS is a chronic condition that needs long-term management. However, many of the current treatment modalities are ineffective. The underlying causes of IBS are not fully understood, but are probably complex. This likely explains why some patients do not respond to treatment. Certainly better understanding of the underlying causes of IBS would contribute to devising better treatment options and decrease the number of invasive tests required.

What is our goal?

The goal of the network is to guide a comprehensive search for the genetic and non-genetic factors that contribute to IBS. Because of the complex nature of IBS, this ambitious goal can only be achieved by analyzing many patients under strict and well-defined guidelines. This will allow us to compare samples and data collected at multiple sites across the 21 countries involved in this collaboration. The outcomes of this action will improve international collaborations to unravel the mechanisms of IBS and maximize the potential for better diagnostic tools and superior treatment options.

How can you help?

If you are interested in promoting the goals of our initiative please contact the Action Chair genieur@yahoo.de



Please find more information on our website @ www.GENIEUR.eu