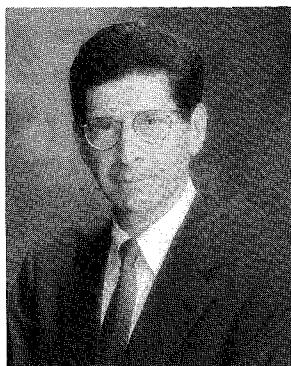


Inflammatory Bowel Disease: A Managed Care Perspective



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This roundtable discussion brought together clinicians and managed care personnel for a dynamic and thought-provoking examination of one of the most complex and difficult chronic disorders: inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). In addition to outlining a rational approach to the evaluation, initial treatment, and maintenance of the two manifestations of IBD—ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease—the participants focused on the difficult issue of who should be handling the care of these patients. While new models for specialty care are currently being developed by many managed care organizations, it remains unclear whether primary care physicians or gastroenterologists should oversee total care for these patients.

Because IBD, especially Crohn's disease, can manifest in a wide range of both gastrointestinal and extraluminal symptoms and because many of the current treatments require careful monitoring for both side effects and efficacy, many argue that the gastroenterologist should provide *all* care for these patients. In

contrast, others maintain that except for initial diagnosis, occasional flares, and treatment with toxic medications, IBD patients can successfully be monitored by their primary care physicians. The reality is that this decision, as with all decisions concerning IBD patients, can only be made on a case-by-case basis.

Regardless of the level at which care is given, one critical component to successful management of the patient is effective communication from all concerned: the patient, the primary care physician, the gastroenterologist, and the managed care organization.

Within the pages of this Special Report supplement to *The American Journal of Managed Care*, the following points are addressed:

- The difficulties of treatment and management decision making in IBD.
- The specific concerns of primary care practitioners and managed care organizations.
- When to refer patients to gastroenterologists and subspecialists in inflammatory bowel disease.