GI Symptoms Can Persist 10 Years After Infection

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BOSTON – Thirty percent of individuals with a history of Salmonella or Campylobacter infection reported ongoing postinfectious symptoms as long as 10 years after the initial infectious event, according to Paul Enck, Ph.D., who presented the results in a poster at the meeting. These patients represent a clinically important population with high somatization, anxiety, and depression scores, said Dr. Enck, director of research in the department of psychosomatic medicine, University Hospital Tübingen (Germany).

Surveys were sent to 576 people who had come to University Hospital Tübingen between 2000 and mid-2009 and had documented Salmonella or Campylobacter gastrointestinal infection. A total of 189 (36%) responded to the brief survey, which asked about current GI symptoms and willingness to participate in a further investigation of their infection history and consequences.

Of the 189 survey respondents, 56 people (30%) indicated that they were still symptomatic (end of 2009). The 56 patients included 6 patients originally infected in 2000, 5 patients infected in 2001, and 2 infected in 2002. The average age of the respondents at the time of infection was 39.8 years, and at the time of the survey it was 43.1 years. Thirty-two patients had a history of Salmonella and 24 had a history of Campylobacter. Dr. Enck said at the meeting, which was hosted by the American Neurogastroenterology and Motility Society.

Symptomatic individuals were then split into two, a second, more extensive questionnaire that focused on postinfectious irritative bowel syndrome (PI-IIBS). This survey was developed and validated by the European Society of Neurogastroenterology and Motility, and is available online at www.postinfectious-ibs.eu. Ninety-one percent (51 patients) responded to the questionnaire. The majority of the sample (69%, or 35 patients) met criteria for PI-IIBS, which includes the presence of two or more symptoms such as sudden-onset fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or bloody stools. Overall, 84% (43/51) were symptomatic during the preceding 9 months. Of the 20 patients (36%) who had a history of Campylobacter, 16 (36%) responded to the brief survey, but only 7 (14%) had met IBS criteria before the infection.