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Dietary challenge tests: identifying food intolerance as a cause of symptoms in irritable bowel syndrome patients

Yanyong Deng, MD., PhD., Yujin Zhu, MD., Ning Dai, MD., PhD., Mark Fox, MD, MA, FRCP



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Dear Editor:

We have read with interest the recent study by Le Nevé et al¹ that assessed visceral sensitivity and symptom severity in irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) patients following a combined nutrient and lactulose challenge. The authors report that symptom severity assessed by validated questionnaires was significantly higher in patients with “high-intensity gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms” (HGS) compared with those with “low-intensity GI symptoms” (LGS) after the test meal. The HGS group had also high levels of anxiety and elevated Visceral Sensitivity Index scores (both $P < 0.05$). Further, compared to the LGS group, patients in the HGS group had higher rectal sensitivity to phasic distensions administered by an electronic barostat ($P < 0.05 - 0.001$).

It is well known that patients with functional GI disorders are more likely to report food intolerance than healthy individuals^{2,3}. Indeed, the striking similarity between IBS and food intolerance symptoms suggests that malabsorption of certain foods (e.g. FODMAPs: Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides, and Polyols) is an important cause of abdominal symptoms in many IBS patients^{4,5}. Chemically similar to lactulose, lactose is a disaccharide FODMAP in

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