

2008

The Inflammatory Bowel Movement

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Wilderdijk, M. "The Inflammatory Bowel Movement". The Proceedings of the 17th Annual History of Medicine Days, March 7th and 8th, 2008 Health Sciences Centre, Calgary, AB.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/47504>

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Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, collectively known as the *Inflammatory Bowel Diseases* (IBD), are more common in developed nations. Ulcerative colitis was first described in Britain in the 19th century and Crohn's disease in the 20th century, though staggered reports of the condition potentially date back to 130 AD. While the incidence rates of IBD appeared to increase and then stabilize in Western Europe and North America, the incidence of IBD is increasing in developmentally-lagging countries as they become more industrialized.

A great deal of progress has been made in the past fifty years in searching for possible causes of the inflammatory bowel diseases. Research has shown that there are several potential precipitators of the pathology. Recent conceptions of the pathogenesis of IBD have suggested that IBD results from dysregulation of the gut's immune system to gut microflora occurring in genetically-predisposed individuals who are exposed to one or more unknown environmental triggers. However, a definite cause has not been identified.

The hygiene hypothesis suggests that perhaps our behaviours have altered an ideal balance and may lead to a predisposition to the disease. This is supported by preliminary studies on helminthic therapy for IBD.

History of medicine and subsequently epidemiologic studies indicate that IBD arose primarily in the modern era as nations became industrialized. Thus, the study of the history of IBD can also provide insight for current-day researchers to explore possible causes of IBD, which may lead to innovative non-surgical therapies for afflicted individuals such as helminthic therapy.