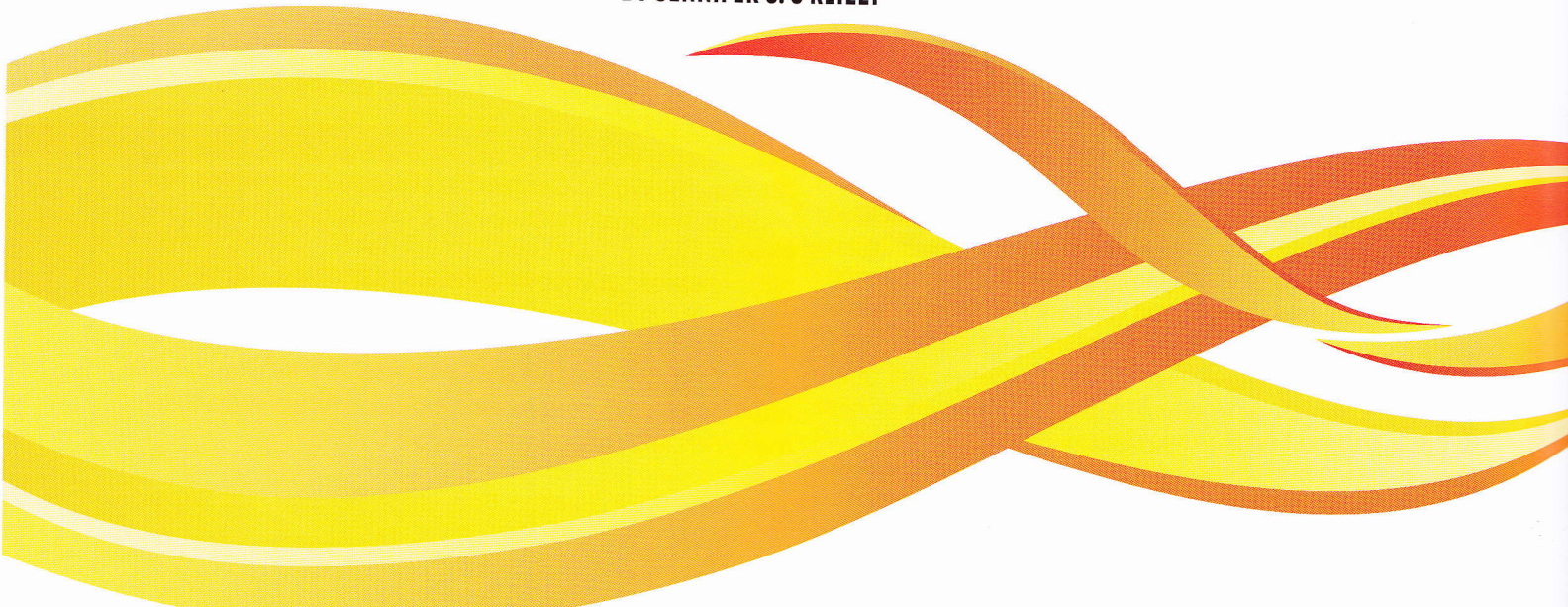


IBS:

IDENTIFYING SYMPTOMS, TREATMENT, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHARMACIST COUNSELING

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Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, can be a problem for many. Some have severe symptoms, while others find their discomfort manageable. The cause of irritable bowel syndrome is not known, but the symptoms are treatable. The illness is a group of symptoms rather than one symptom. IBS is a long-term disorder which involves the large and small bowel/intestine. Abdominal pain and discomfort are the main symptoms of IBS. Patients may feel better after emptying their bowels. Pain can occur when the stool frequency or consistency is altered and a patient's symptoms can change or come and go over time.

There are four different types of IBS and each is treated with a different drug:

IBS-C is IBS with the primary symptom being constipation.

IBS-D is IBS with diarrhea as the primary symptom.

IBS with alternating C & D is IBS with alternating constipation and diarrhea. These two symptoms alternate from a period of weeks to months. The symptoms can linger over time.

IBS-M is mixed IBS. With this type of IBS, constipation and diarrhea are present over hours or days or over a shorter duration of time.

According to the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders, between 25 and 45 million people in the US are affected by IBS. Most sufferers are female, but IBS also

affects males and children as well. IBS is very common, but not many seek treatment for their symptoms. The symptoms can be unpredictable and can impact a patient's personal and professional life and a firm understanding of the illness and ways to treat it are imperative.

Knowing what triggers a patient's IBS is important for both patients and technicians. Some triggers are particular foods, stress, and hormones. Certain foods can make IBS worse. Many of us like vegetables, fruits, and carbonated beverages, but they can increase gas and bloating so quantities of these foods should be avoided or limited. Foods such as chocolate, milk, and alcohol can cause constipation and diarrhea. It's very important for patients to watch what they eat to help control their symptoms. Another trigger is stress. Stress is a fact of daily life, but how we cope with stress is important and essential to dealing with it. It is important to know that stress does not cause IBS symptoms, but it can aggravate them. Hormones can also play a part in triggering IBS symptoms. Changes in hormone levels can affect IBS. Many women find their symptoms are more severe during or close to their menstrual period.

There are a variety of prescriptions used to treat IBS. It is impossible to list every drug here, but I have mentioned some of the pioneer drugs used to treat IBS. One of these being antidepressants. IBS is a life-long illness, but with the right medication, support, and knowledge it can be managed at a healthy level.