

Thursday, 28th February 2008

THE GUT TRUST WELCOMES NICE GUIDELINES ON IBS
charity hopes further refinements and more emphasis on the value of probiotics and
complementary therapies will follow

The Gut Trust has broadly welcomed the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence's guidelines launched today on 'Irritable Bowel Syndrome in adults: diagnosis and management of Irritable Bowel Syndrome in primary care'. The Trust is the only charity to support people with IBS, which affects an estimated one in 10 of the British population.

The Gut Trust took part in the consultation process and has approved the emphasis on self-help and on encouraging people with IBS to adapt their lifestyles and diet. The Trust has advocated self-help for many years, providing advice, information and support, including a dedicated IBS help-line. It recently launched a unique and comprehensive self management programme for its members, devised by its medical adviser, Professor Nick Read.

The Trust, which provides dedicated support for GPs through the provision of patient-focussed information, also praises the positive diagnosis approach recommended in the guidelines. This approach deals with the uncertainty of diagnosis and offers a faster route to treatment.

Jonathan Blanchard Smith, chairman of the Trust, who himself has IBS, commented: 'These guidelines are a major step forward for the many millions who live with IBS. We wholeheartedly support the positive diagnosis approach and we are delighted with the emphasis on self-help since that is what this charity is founded upon. Uniquely, we have actively been actively promoting self-help for more than 10 years.

'We also believe that the advice on fibre consumption is long overdue. People with IBS should be actively discouraged from taking insoluble fibre such as bran, for example.

'However, there are still areas where we have some concerns. The guidelines are critical of reflexology and acupuncture. Our experience is that many people with IBS have positive experiences of complementary therapies, including reflexology and acupuncture and, while there may be little clinical evidence for them at this stage, they appear to provide symptom relief and a degree of comfort and reassurance.

He continued: 'We also note that there is very non-specific advice relating to probiotics. These products may be effective for some people if in the correct strength, using the correct constituents.'

For more information about The Gut Trust's Self Management Programme, and background to IBS and the Gut Trust, see www.theguttrust.org.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Interviews with the Gut Trust's chairman, Jonathan Blanchard Smith and with the medical advisor, Professor Nick Read are available on Thursday, 28th February, and before, by arrangement.

For more press information, contact: Cherry Chappell on 020 7351 7545

cherryc@dircon.co.uk