

Scientists crack the puzzle of inflammatory bowel disease

By Knowridge - July 24, 2023



Credit: Unsplash+

In a quest to better understand Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), an illness that causes severe stomach pain and discomfort, scientists are taking a fresh look.

Instead of the usual methods, they're examining something called the microbiome for potential answers.

If you're wondering what the microbiome is, think of it as a community of tiny organisms like bacteria that live in our bodies. Many of these bacteria are good for us, and help us stay healthy.

A dedicated team led by Sam Forster, a well-respected associate professor, is focused on understanding the microbiome's role in IBD.

This team is part of the Hudson Institute of Medical Research. Scientists are always looking for new ways to solve medical problems.

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They have found a group of bacteria that seems to be linked to IBD, and they're now working on using this discovery to create new treatments for the disease.

They recently shared their findings in a respected science magazine called Cell Reports Medicine.

A Closer Look at the Microbiome

The team's method of research is unique and helps them gain a clearer understanding of how the microbiome and diseases like IBD interact.

They get their data by taking small tissue samples from the exact place in the body where the disease is found and from healthy parts of the same patient.

They then compare the bacteria present in both samples. This method is quite different from previous ones which mostly relied on studying bacteria found in feces, which doesn't give a clear picture of the bacteria present at the disease site.

To explain this, Forster gives an easy-to-understand comparison. He says studying feces to understand the microbiome is like using a bulldozer to understand what a forest looks like.

You only see what's been scooped up, but miss out on the finer details. But taking samples directly from the body is like finding a tiny ant and knowing it lives only on a certain type of tree leaf.

A New Way to Analyze Bacteria

Gemma D'Adamo, a Ph.D. student in the team, adds that they also use a special technique to understand bacteria better.

Instead of grouping bacteria by species like the usual method, they've adopted a new approach. They identify bacteria based on shared functions, such as those that cause disease.

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These studies are not just for the sake of knowledge. They are very important for the nearly 75,000 Australians suffering from IBD. This research is identifying bacteria that could be developed into living medicines.

This gives hope to those with IBD, because it could lead to new treatments that manage the disease's symptoms better.

One of the key researchers, Dr. Edward Giles, says that they've found bacteria that may play a part in making IBD worse. This discovery offers hope for better symptom management for those with the disease.

To make these treatments a reality, Forster's team is collaborating with a company called Biomebank. This company, based in Adelaide, aims to treat and prevent diseases by improving the balance of bacteria in our guts.

They are dedicated to turning these scientific discoveries into treatments that can change people's lives.

If you care about gut health, please read studies about [a major cause of leaky gut, and fatty liver disease](#), and [eating nuts may help reduce risks of gut lesions and cancer](#).

For more information about health, please see recent studies about [what postbiotics are and how they can improve our gut health](#), and results showing [common dietary fiber may trigger inflammation in the gut and lungs](#).

The study was [published](#) in *Cell Reports Medicine*.

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