

## **Gastroenterology News:**

### **Colon Cancer Prevention:**

Recent research indicates that colonoscopy is superior to flexible sigmoidoscopy for detection of polyps and prevention of colon cancer, particularly in women. Women have more polyps on the right side (farther from rectum) that would not be detected by shorter sigmoidoscopy. (Schoenfeld et al, New England Journal of Medicine 2005)

African Americans also have more polyps on the right side of the colon, making colonoscopy a better screening test for cancer and polyps in this group. (Agrawal et al, Am Journal of Gastro 2005)

Less than 50% of people over 50 years of age have had colon cancer screening. (Lieberman, Am Journal of Gastro 2006)

### **Inflammatory Bowel Disease:**

Ulcerative colitis has a new therapy called Remicade. This infusion is an antibody against TNFalpha, an inflammatory messenger in the blood. Three Remicade infusions improved severe ulcerative colitis symptoms in 2/3 of patients treated.

Crohns disease is now known to increase the risk of colon cancer by approximately double. (Jess et al, Am J Gastro 2006) Screening Crohns patients for colorectal cancer with colonoscopy earlier and more frequently than average patients is reasonable.

### **Irritable bowel syndrome:**

There is increased interest in bacteria for irritable bowel syndrome. One small study suggests that bifidobacter may reduce symptoms in IBS. Antibiotics may also reduce symptoms of IBS and bloating, presumably by reducing bacteria in the small bowel. (Shahara et al, Am J Gastro 2006) These preliminary findings are now being studied further. You may inquire about our clinical trial, 383-0165.

### **Acid Reflux Disease:**

Acid reflux has been associated with Barrett's esophagus, a precancerous change in the lining of the lower esophagus. Once Barrett's develops, the chance of cancer arising within it is approximately 1% per year. The chance of death in Barrett's esophagus patients is 37% higher than controls, and half of this increase is due to esophageal cancer (Solayamani-Dodaran et al, Am J Gastro 2006). Because of this risk we recommend endoscopy to check for Barrett's in patients with longstanding heartburn symptoms.