Preface

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) imposes significant challenges on patients' lives from the time of diagnosis, and in a number of patients a complicated course of the disease results in successive challenges to their personal, familial, social, and professional development.

IBD becomes also a challenge for the treating health care professionals, including physicians, surgeons and nurses, and for basic scientists. The disease results from an abnormal immune response to components of the intestinal lumen (probably flora) in genetically susceptible individuals, which are triggered and modulated by environmental factors. But each one of these components: genetics, microbiome, immune response and environmental factors remain to be fully elucidated.

At the clinical level, diagnosing IBD poses significant challenges. In world regions with a high prevalence of infectious colitis, the differential diagnosis between these and IBD is not an easy task. In patients with purely colonic IBD, the distinction between Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis frequently needs expert assessment of clinical, endoscopic, histologic and radiologic data. Challenges in disease management are not only related to the treatment of a complicated disease, but to the development of a treatment plan for every patient, tailored to the patient's needs and expectations by making an optimal use of available medical and surgical options and adopting measures to prevent disease- and treatment-related complications.

The objective of the 187th Falk Symposium held in Barcelona was to gather the best science and clinical experience to guide basic and clinical research as well as medical care of our IBD patients. The articles included in this publication correspond to the topics presented at the Symposium, and cover basic aspects of disease pathophysiology, an extensive review of aspects of diagnosis that includes endoscopy, histology and cross-sectional imaging, best use of different drug classes and therapeutic strategies, the role of surgery, management of extraintestinal manifestations, and cancer prevention and surveillance. Overall, the information compiled provides the basis for Overcoming Challenges in IBD Management.

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