



HEALTH AWARENESS

Often Overlooked, IBS Impacts Lives Of Millions

(NAPSA)—How would you feel if you had to give up your favorite activities because of a medical condition? Not cancer, or paralysis, but an often-overlooked digestive disorder called Irritable Bowel Syndrome, also known as IBS.

IBS affects up to 45 million Americans. It is characterized by abdominal pain or discomfort and altered bowel habits. The impact of IBS can range from mild inconvenience to severe debilitation, controlling many aspects of one's emotional, social and professional life. Those with moderate to severe cases must struggle to overcome symptoms that often impair their physical, emotional, economic, educational and social well-being.

Although IBS is very common, most people with symptoms of IBS often go for several years without it being diagnosed, which is why the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) has designated April as IBS Awareness Month.

"IBS is all too often misdiagnosed and ignored because symptoms vary," said IFFGD Founder and President Nancy Norton. "But it is very common in the United States, especially among women, so patients and doctors need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of the disease."

A survey by IFFGD found IBS patients miss out on some of their favorite activities an average of once a week. Yet, more research and awareness is needed to provide additional resources for diagnosis and treatment.



IBS, affecting 10-15 percent of the population, is one of the leading causes of absenteeism from work.

The survey also demonstrates how important it is to expand research in this area to develop therapies to help IBS sufferers. The disease is one of the leading causes of absenteeism from work, and one of the most common disorders seen by gastroenterologists. The goal of IBS Awareness Month is to educate the public about the disease and encourage people to talk to their doctors.

Approximately 60 to 65 percent of IBS sufferers are female; 35 to 40 percent are male. The exact cause of IBS is not known. Symptoms result from a disturbance in the interaction between the gut, brain and nervous system that alters regulation of bowel motor or sensory function. It may be triggered by stress.

For more information about this disorder visit www.iffgd.org or call 1-888-964-2001.