

International Colitis and Crohn’s Disease Patient Meeting Highlights Importance of Doctor-Patient Communications

4th May 2005. St Albans, Herts. A leading UK patient charity, the National Association for Colitis and Crohn’s Disease (NACC), and the European Federation of Crohn’s and Ulcerative Colitis Associations (EFCCA), have jointly set up an Doctor–Patient International Forum to explore and promote best practice in doctor–patient relationships in the life-long, debilitating and often embarrassing conditions, ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease. The meeting which takes place at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham on Saturday 7th May will highlight the fact that there is “no such thing as a typical colitis and Crohn’s patient” and will offer doctors tangible advice on how best to conduct successful out-patient consultations in gastroenterology units.

The NACC/EFCCA Doctor–Patient Forum, supported by the Falk Foundation, is a vitally important progression in NACC’s continuing work to improve the quality of life for people affected by ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease. With Crohn’s Disease on the increase and one in four hundred people affected in the UK by the two sometimes life-threatening conditions, NACC’s work is of growing relevance.

Professor Alan Radley, Professor of Social Psychology at Loughborough University, one of the key note speakers, will address the forum on the findings of a NACC-funded study undertaken with Dr John Mayberry’s Gastroenterology Department at Leicester General Hospital. Professor Radley will show the audience video clips taken during consultations with colitis or Crohn’s disease patients to demonstrate how patients communicate subtle but highly important messages during the course of a consultation and how doctors may or may not pick up and respond to these messages.

Professor Radley's presentation will highlight the importance of continuity of patient care in these long-term medical conditions and show how doctors should build up an agenda of patient trust by being receptive to subtle messages as well as addressing the patient's medical needs.

Dr John Mayberry, consultant gastroenterologist at Leicester General Hospital and co-author of the study explains, "Our patients all expressed their determination to continue to function as normally as possible despite living with severe physical symptoms such as diarrhoea, pain and tiredness. The central aim of our study was to explore how and when the concerns of colitis and Crohn's patients are included within the treatment protocols of their doctors.

Dr Mayberry continues, "One of our findings showed that problems during the consultation can be overcome by the doctor asking open-ended questions at the beginning of the consultation to fully elicit the patient's agenda. We also concluded that addressing patients' medical needs and listening to their personal stories are **both** required elements if the consultation is to be judged effective by the patients. We hope that our study will assist doctors to communicate more effectively with their patients and improve awareness of what such consultations can achieve." A full programme is attached.

If you would like a report of the meeting and a colitis or Crohn's disease case history, please contact Pam French on 01428 604444 or by e-mail on pam@healthcare-pr.co.uk. **Ends**