The International Digestive Cancer Alliance—What Are Its Goals?

The International Digestive Cancer Alliance (IDCA) was launched at a meeting held at the Vatican in Rome in March 2002, with our Italian colleagues, Alberto Montori and Massimo Crespi who provided their support. Important global and continental organizations such as OMGE, OMED, UEGF, ESGE, UICC and CRPF were present as founding organizations and agreed to provide assistance for the IDCA in achieving its goals. Pope John Paul II also provided support and encouragement with a message that the IDCA and its partners should “inform the public that they can enjoy better health if they follow a regular lifestyle and undergo periodic check-ups.” The organization’s mission statement involves promoting screening for, early detection of, and primary prevention of digestive cancers throughout the world—both through the IDCA itself and through partner organizations that share the same goals.

As a group, digestive cancers (colon, esophagus and stomach, liver, pancreas), has the highest incidence (three million) and mortality (two million) annually of all cancers worldwide.

It was clear that the numerically most frequent type of digestive cancer—colon cancer—had to be the IDCA’s first focus of attention. A public information campaign with ambitious goals was started: the aims are that by 2005, 75% of the population are to be made aware of colon cancer and 50% are to be taking part in some type of screening program. By 2016, both the incidence and the mortality from bowel cancer are to be reduced by 50%.

The International Alliance consists of a core group that will facilitate, coordinate and help support national programs for preventing digestive cancer initiated by the organization’s national member societies. The Alliance will provide:

- A forum for interaction among National Societies through web sites, meetings, and communications, for those with established programs and for those with emerging programs
- Guidance on how to initiate national prevention programs

(continued on page 45)
• Data from international surveys
• Epidemiological and statistical data
• Experts for consultation, speaking and organization
• Materials that can be used nationally (educational, logistics, communications, etc.)
• Models for effective interactive meetings
• Recognition for member societies in global campaigns, media reports, and conferences
• Mentoring by national programs for emerging programs

Fifty national gastroenterology societies have so far affiliated with the IDCA, and other international organizations have also offered to collaborate.

Following the inaugural meeting in Rome in 2002, various scientific events organized by the IDCA have been held, including a very successful one in the USA in collaboration with the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation (CRPF), based on the CRPF’s “Dialogue for Action” model. The IDCA’s activities have stimulated several national societies to place the topic of early detection and prevention of cancer of the digestive organs on their agendas. The IDCA’s representatives have taken an active part in numerous national conferences in Europe, the Middle East, South America, and Asia. Five points of focus for activities in 2004 were planned. In February, the First National Working Conference in Germany took place, on the topic “Colon cancer can be conquered by early recognition.” Caroline Aldigé and Sidney Winawer served as patrons of the meeting. In March, a CRPF/IDCA joint symposium on CRC prevention was held under the heading “Think globally, act locally.” In June, Russian gastroenterologists were to organize an international inaugural meeting in Moscow on colon cancer screening, in collaboration with the IDCA. The event will mark the start of a campaign in Russia, a vast country. IDCA helped the Russian Gastroenterology Association develop project outcomes on their proposed screening program using IARC data. Together with the Brazilian Gastroenterology Society, the IDCA will start an awareness campaign this fall on early detection of colon cancer, and we will then, in collaboration with Chinese gastroenterologists in Beijing, start a prevention program for gastric cancer. In several regions of China, gastric cancer is by far the most frequent form of digestive cancer.

The IDCA is one of the world’s fastest-growing international medical organizations. Awareness of digestive cancer has clearly not previously received sufficient attention. We are certain that the enthusiasm that has so much inspired all of the IDCA’s members so far will continue to drive us forward.

There isn’t a physician who hasn’t at least one “Case to Remember” in his career.
Share that case with your fellow gastroenterologists.

Send it to Editor:
Practical Gastroenterology,
99B Main Street
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978.
Include any appropriate illustrations.
Also, include a photo of yourself.

Practical Gastroenterology reprints are valuable, authoritative, and informative. Special rates are available for quantities of 100 or more.

For further details on rates or to place an order:
Practical Gastroenterology
Shugar Publishing
99B Main Street
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978
Phone: 631-288-4404  Fax: 631-288-4435