



## Research Forum: Comparison of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) Patients in Gastroenterology and Primary Care Clinics

*Principal Author: Olafur S. Palsson, PsyD*

IBS patients who see gastroenterologists (GI specialists) are thought to have more severe symptoms than those seen in primary care. However, no published U.S. data comparing IBS patients in the two settings existed to evaluate this notion. 1603 patients diagnosed with IBS, functional diarrhea, constipation or abdominal pain visiting the GI and primary care clinics of a large northwestern health maintenance organization participated in a mail survey. We found that IBS patients in primary care clinics have IBS symptoms that are as severe as the symptoms of patients seen in GI clinics, and they also have similar impairments in health-related quality of life and similar numbers of comorbid medical disorders. We speculate that patients are referred to gastroenterologists not because they have more severe symptoms but because they need an endoscopic evaluation to rule out other diseases.