



Division of Bacterial Diseases (DBD)

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Helicobacter pylori and Peptic Ulcer Disease

History of Ulcer Diagnosis and Treatment

The road to a cure for ulcers has been a long and bumpy one. Recent news that ulcers are caused by a bacterium and can be cured with antibiotics has changed traditional thinking. Physicians and consumers have not been informed of the good news.

Early 20th Century

Ulcers are believed to be caused by stress and dietary factors. Treatment focuses on hospitalization, bed rest, and prescription of special bland foods. Later, gastric acid is blamed for ulcer disease. Antacids and medications that block acid production become the standard of therapy. Despite this treatment, there is a high recurrence of ulcers.

1982

Australian physicians Robin Warren and Barry Marshall first identify the link between *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) and ulcers, concluding that the bacterium, not stress or diet, causes ulcers. The medical community is slow to accept their findings.

1994

A National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Conference concludes that there is a strong association between *H. pylori* and ulcer disease, and recommends that ulcer patients with *H. pylori* infection be treated with antibiotics.

1995

Data show that about 75 percent of ulcer patients are still treated primarily with antisecretory medications, and only 5 percent receive antibiotic therapy. Consumer research by the American Digestive Health Foundation finds that nearly 90 percent of ulcer sufferers are unaware that *H. pylori* causes ulcers. In fact, nearly 90 percent of those with ulcers blame their ulcers on stress or worry, and 60 percent point to diet.

1996

The Food and Drug Administration approves the first antibiotic for treatment of ulcer disease.

1997

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with other government agencies, academic institutions, and industry, launches a national education campaign to inform health care providers and consumers about the link between *H. pylori* and ulcers. This campaign reinforces the news that ulcers are a curable infection, and the fact that health can be greatly improved and money saved by disseminating information about *H. pylori*. Medical researchers sequence the *H. pylori* genome. This discovery can help scientists better understand the bacterium and design more effective drugs to fight it.

References:

1. Munnangi S. and Sonnenberg A. Time Trends of Physician Visits and Treatment Patterns of Peptic Ulcer Disease in the United States. *Arch Intern Med.* vol. 175, July 14, 1997. pp 1489-94.
2. *Helicobacter pylori* in Peptic Ulcer Disease, National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Panel on *Helicobacter pylori* in Peptic Ulcer Disease, *Journal of the American Medical Association.* Volume 272, no. 1. July 6, 1994, pp 65-69.



For more information about *H. pylori* infection and ulcers, see your health care provider or call toll-free: 1-888-MY-ULCER.

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