

# A Four-Country Comparison of Healthcare Systems, Implementation of Diagnostic Criteria, and Treatment Availability for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders: A Report of the Rome Foundation Working Team on Cross-Cultural, Multinational Research

M. SCHMULSON, E. CORAZZIARI, U. C. GHOSHAL, S.-J. MYUNG, C. D. GERSON, E. M. M. QUIGLEY, K.-A. GWEE & A. D. SPERBER

## Abstract

**Background:** Variations in healthcare provision around the world may impact how patients with functional gastrointestinal disorder (FGIDs) are investigated, diagnosed, and treated. However, these differences have not been reviewed.

**Purposes:** The Multinational Working Team of the Rome Foundation, established to make recommendations on the conduct of multinational, cross-cultural research in FGIDs, identified seven key issues that are analyzed herein: (i) coverage afforded by different healthcare systems/providers; (ii) level of the healthcare system where patients with FGIDs are treated; (iii) extent/types of diagnostic procedures typically undertaken to diagnose FGIDs; (iv) physicians' familiarity with and implementation of the Rome diagnostic criteria in clinical practice; (v) range of medications approved for FGIDs and approval process for new agents; (vi) costs involved in treating FGIDs; and (vii) prevalence and role of complementary/alternative medicine (CAM) for FGIDs. Because it was not feasible to survey all countries around the world, we compared a selected number of countries based on their geo-graphical and ethno-cultural diversity. Thus, we included Italy and South Korea as representative of nations with broad-based coverage of healthcare in the population and India and Mexico as newly industrialized countries where there may be limited provision of healthcare for substantial segments of the population. In light of the paucity of formal publications on these issues, we included additional sources from the medical literature as well as perspectives provided by local experts and the media. Finally, we provide future directions on healthcare issues that should be taken into account and implemented when conducting cross-cultural and multi-national research in FGIDs.

**Keywords** available medications, CAM, cross-cultural, multinational trials, diagnostic procedures, expenditures, Functional gastrointestinal disorders, healthcare coverage, IBS, registration process.

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