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My name is Eamonn Quigley and I'm privileged to serve as Chair of the World Gastroenterology Organisation Foundation. The World Gastroenterology Organisation, though over 50 years old, only recently established a foundation whose specific remit was to raise funds to support the educational and training activities of the World Gastroenterology Organisation. These training programs have been highly successful and include: Train the Trainers, a total of 16 WGO Training Centers, over 20 global guidelines, and World Digestive Health Day. Indeed, World Digestive Health Day has become a major focus for the Foundation. WDHD, as we call it, was established in 2004 and is a worldwide public health campaign which we work through our member societies, of which there are over 100, and indeed, reach at least 50,000 individual gastroenterologists.

However, the focus of these campaigns is on the general public and each year we identify an issue in digestive or liver disorders, which we feel is of global importance. And our goal is to reach the general public, reach healthcare practitioners, and increase awareness of prevention and optimum therapy of these conditions.

In the past we've highlighted such conditions as liver cancer, Helicobacter pylori, diarrhea, and hepatitis. In 2012 we took a somewhat different approach and we highlighted what we referred to as common GI symptoms in the community. Indeed, the title of the topic was "From Heartburn to Constipation: Common GI Symptoms in the Community - Impact and Interpretation."

And the goal of this campaign was to help the individual sufferer and healthcare providers to understand these symptoms, to know what they meant, and to know how they could be appropriately and effectively managed. And indeed taking it all the way from the man on the street to the individual sitting in a specialist office.

Thanks to an unrestricted educational grant we have therefore created this webcast for the general public on the irritable bowel syndrome. Why irritable bowel syndrome? Simply because it is, after all, a collection of some of these common GI symptoms: abdominal pain, constipation, bowel habit, bloating. And in this webcast we hope to address what is irritable bowel syndrome, what causes it, and what can be done about it. And now it gives me great pleasure to hand over to Professor Richard Hunt, who is going to chair the symposium.

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