

# IBS, food and stress; new insights, new approaches

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# What is irritable bowel syndrome ?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a disorder of the gut

- abdominal pain and cramping
- an abnormal bowel pattern (diarrhoea, constipation or both)
- abdominal bloating



## The good news

IBS is not a life-threatening condition

IBS will not cause permanent damage to your bowel

IBS will not develop into a more serious condition

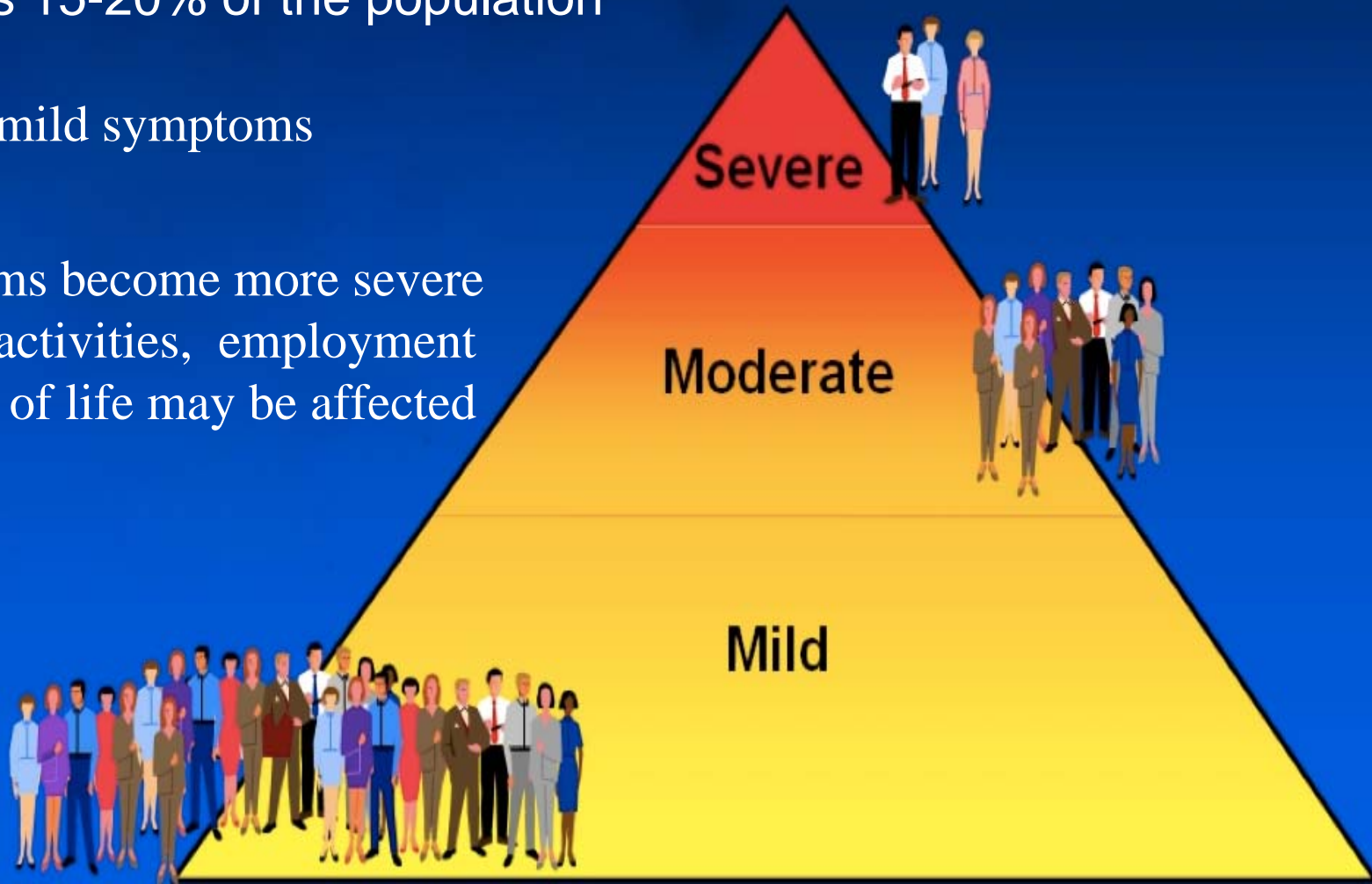


# How common is IBS ?

IBS affects 15-20% of the population

Most have mild symptoms

As symptoms become more severe day to day activities, employment and quality of life may be affected



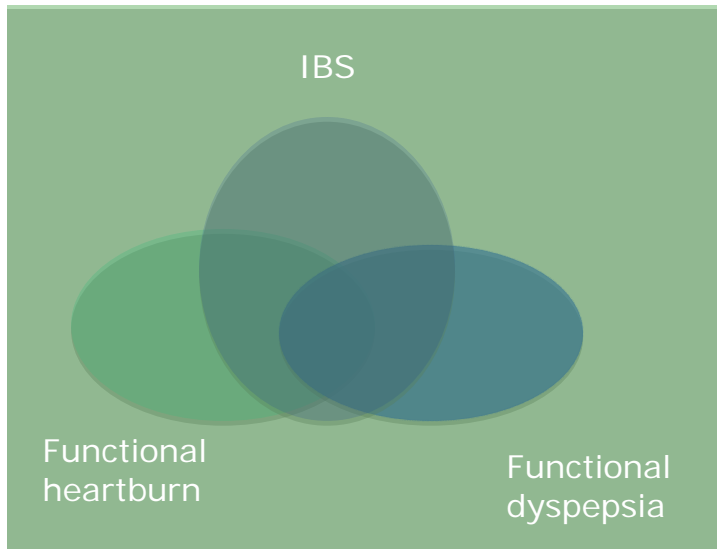
## What is a “functional” disorder ?

A disorder with no structural or biochemical abnormality

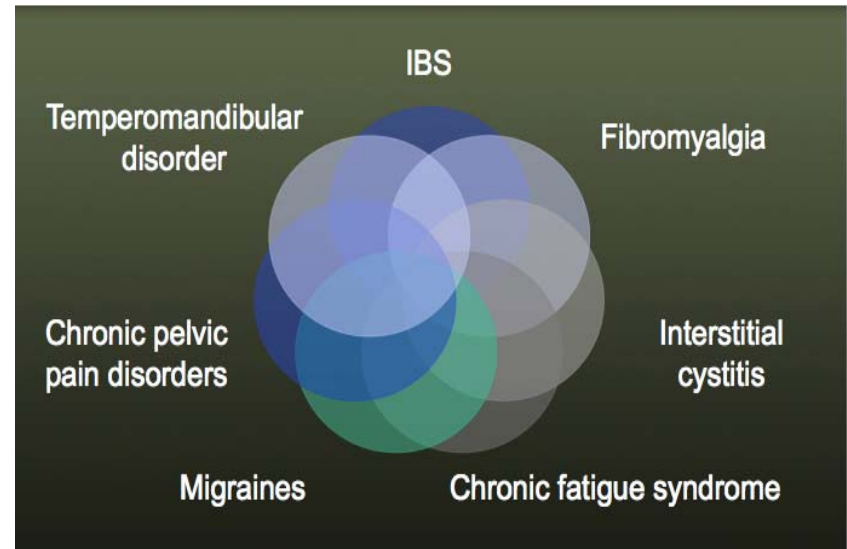
Functional disorders can occur inside and outside the gastrointestinal tract

Patients with IBS sometimes have other functional disorders

## GI functional disorders



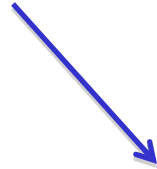
## Non GI functional disorders



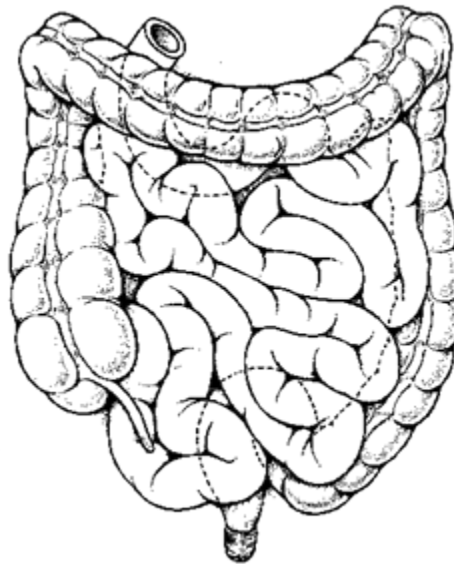
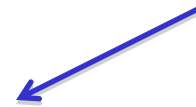
# What causes IBS ?



The brain, stress  
and emotion



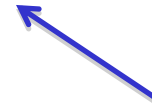
Genetics



Bacteria



Food



# Food & IBS





## Some common misconceptions

- IBS is caused by a food allergy
- Everybody with IBS should eat a high fiber diet
- Eating wheat causes IBS
- Everybody with IBS should eliminate dairy products from their diet

# What is a food allergy ?

- Food allergy is an immune response by which the body makes antibodies to certain foods
- Affects 1-2% of the population
- Can be caused by nuts, eggs, milk, fish, shellfish, soy and sesame
- Can be confirmed by allergic testing



Hives or  
itching



Swelling of  
lips or eyes



Tightening of throat  
or difficulty breathing

## But

- 2/3 of people with IBS have food related symptoms
- Some people with IBS eliminate multiple foods from their diet with no improvement in symptoms
- Unmonitored elimination diets may cause malnutrition, anaemia, vitamin deficiencies and osteoporosis

## Why ?

- The process of eating causes the release of hormones which stimulate the gut and may cause symptoms of IBS- fat, chocolate , alcohol
- Some people have a non-immune reaction to certain foods which causes abdominal symptoms – food intolerance
- Best way to detect it is to keep a food diary

## Fibre & IBS

- A high fibre diet improves overall health
- A gradual increase in dietary fiber can improve abnormal bowel pattern and abdominal pain in some people with IBS
- Works best for those with constipation
- But it can make some people worse
- A trial of elimination of insoluble fibre (the type found in bran and cereals) may be worthwhile in some people with IBS particularly those with diarrhoea

## Wheat & IBS



- Coeliac disease - body cannot tolerate gluten
  - abnormalities in lining of small bowel
  - antibody to gluten in the blood
- Coeliac disease should be excluded in some people with IBS
- A trial of elimination of wheat containing products is warranted in some people with IBS whose symptoms are exacerbated by wheat
- If no improvement reintroduce wheat (people with coeliac disease must remain off gluten permanently)

# Lactose Intolerance & IBS

- Caused by shortage of lactase needed for the digestion of dairy products
- Causes abdominal discomfort, bloating, flatulence, nausea and diarrhoea following the ingestion of milk or milk containing products
- Tests to diagnose lactose intolerance can be inaccurate
- Trial of a complete elimination of all lactose containing products from the diet
- Remember that you still need calcium and vitamin D
- If successful , yoghurt and some dairy products may be reintroduced gradually if tolerated
- If not successful all dairy products should be reintroduced



# What new ?

- FODMAP
- Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides and Polyols
- Fructose and fructans
  - Sorbitol
  - Sucrose
  - Lactose



## Some general measures

- Minimize consumption of alcohol and caffeine
- Eat smaller meals more frequently
- Minimize intake of high fat food
- Gradually increase fiber intake if constipated
- Restrict intake of fructose and sorbitol
- A trial of elimination of wheat or dairy products may be warranted in some cases
- Try one thing at a time
- If no improvement reintroduce the food



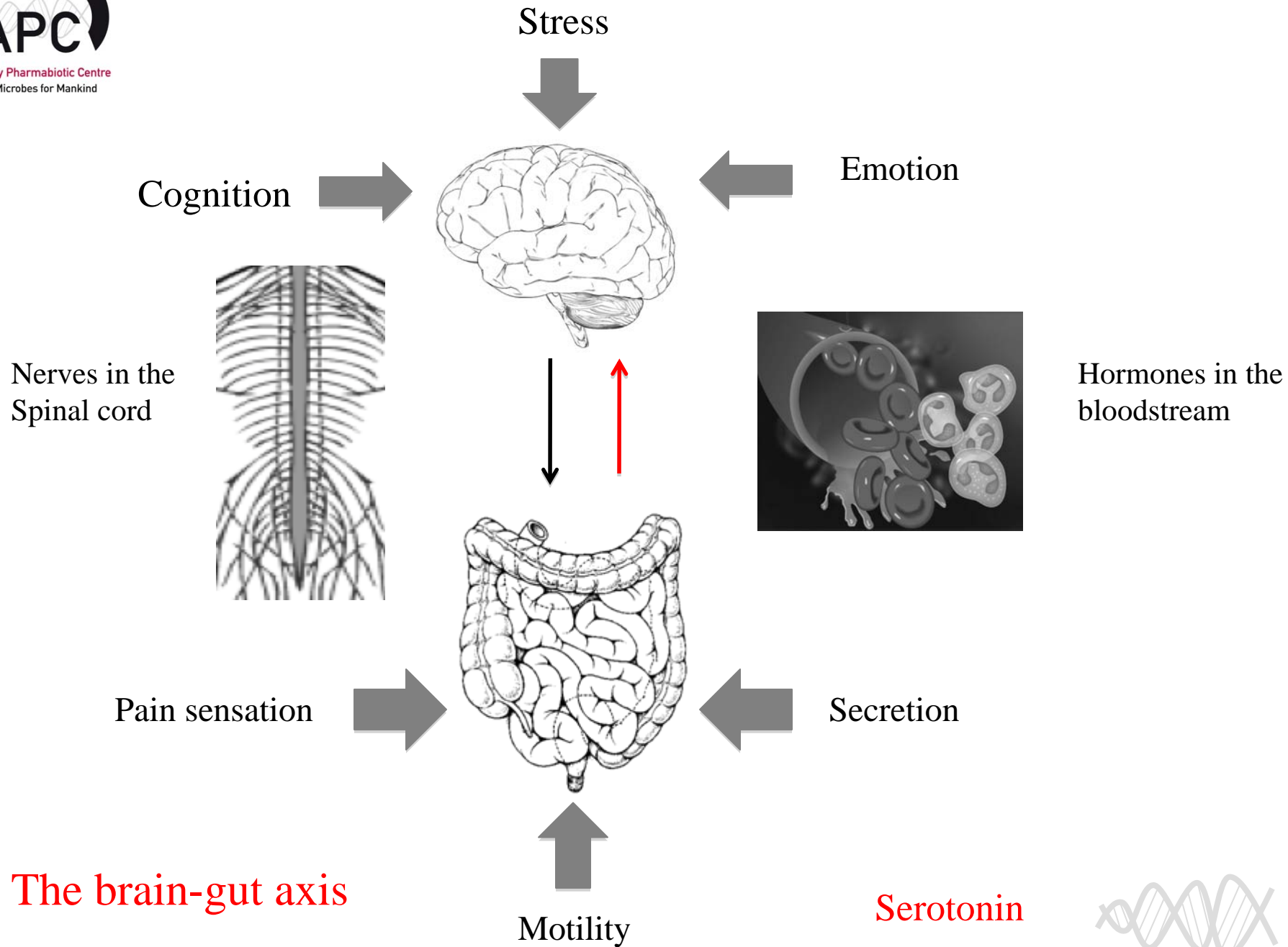
# Stress & IBS



# IBS and the brain

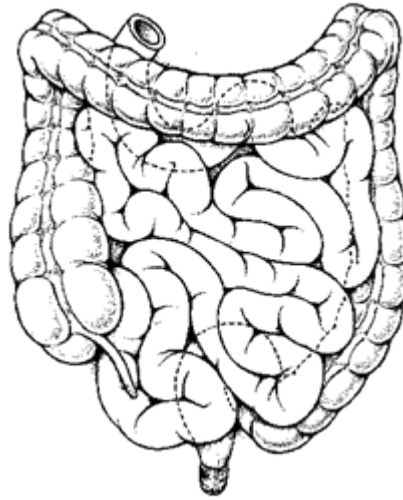
- Symptoms often worse at time of stress
- Higher rates of anxiety and depression in IBS (12 % versus 6 % in those without IBS)





**Serotonin**

## Traditional medication

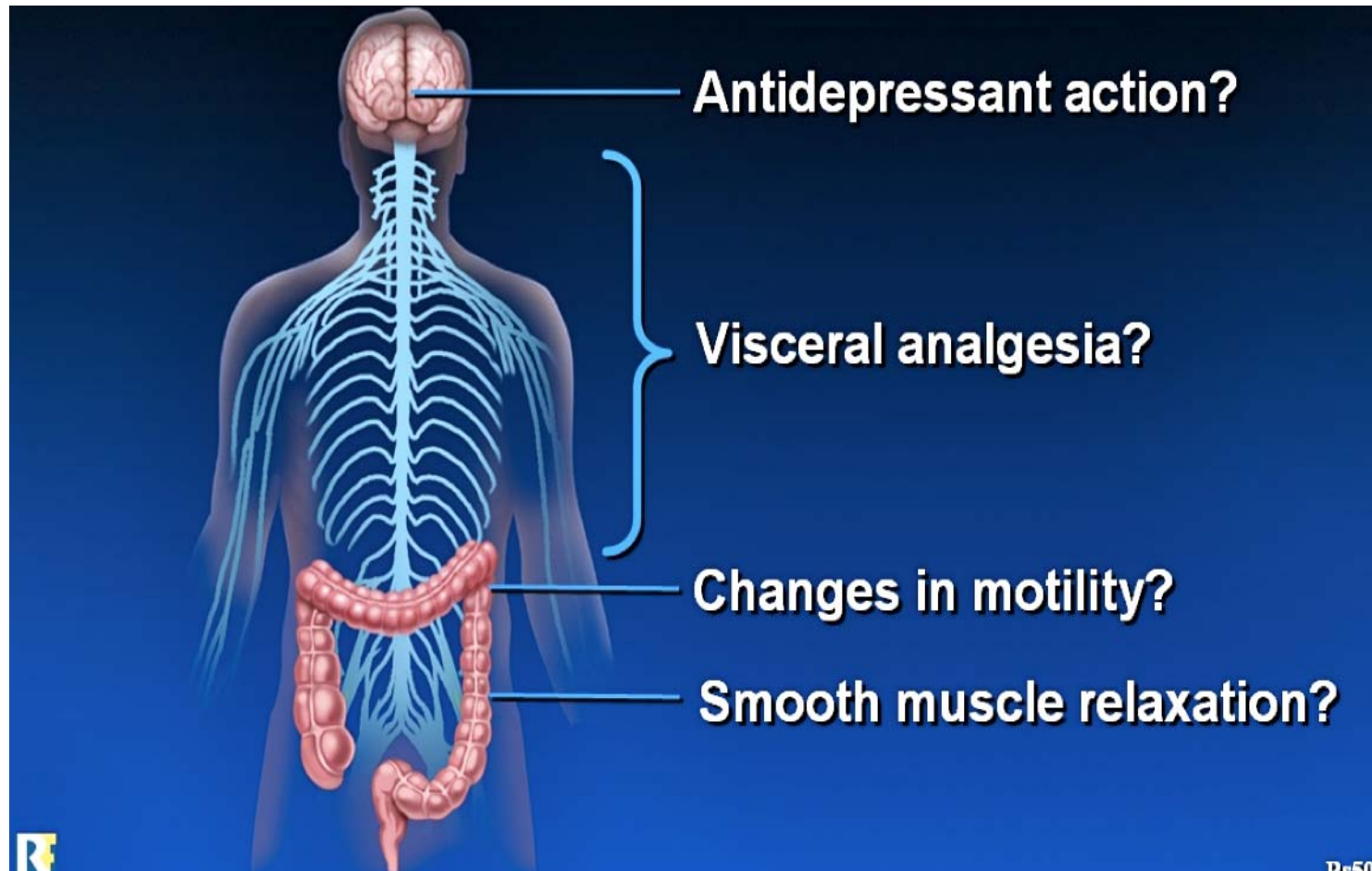


Laxatives

Antispasmodics

Anti diarrhoeals

# Anti-depressants in IBS



# New drugs

- Aim to act on the brain gut axis
- Serotonin and it's receptors in the gut

# Psychological Therapies

- Cognitive behavioral therapy
  - aims to change patterns of thinking and behaviour that influence symptoms
- Hypnotherapy
  - techniques to help the mind control the gut





# Recap

- IBS is common but only a minority have severe symptoms
- It often overlaps with other “functional” syndromes
- Many patients have symptoms following food but this is not necessarily a food “allergy”
- Increasing fiber intake may help
- Unmonitored elimination diets may cause nutritional deficiencies

- Eliminate one food product at a time and reintroduce it if no improvement
- Stress worsens the symptoms of IBS by acting through the pain-gut axis
- Antidepressants may help in IBS even in the absence of depression
- New therapies for IBS are emerging that focus on the link between the brain and the gut
- Psychological therapies are of value in those with severe symptoms

# Thank you