

# Foreword

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), traditionally classified as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, are one of the most fascinating challenge for clinicians and researchers, representing a complex group of chronic diseases with multiform etiopathogenetic, clinical and therapeutic aspects. The etiology of IBD remains largely unexplained, even though there is agreement with regard to multifactorial characters of these disorders. The last fifteen years have witnessed major breakthroughs in our understanding of the mechanisms underlying these diseases. New scientific and medical progress in IBD field includes genetics, gut ecology, immune mechanisms, and targeted biologic therapies. Our current knowledge about the pathophysiology of IBD is that patients have a genetic predisposition for the development of the disease coupled with disturbances of immunoregulation. The chronic inflammatory process can then be triggered by a number of unknown environmental factors and sustained by an abnormal immune response to these factors. These basic understandings have recently and directly translated into novel therapies in the form of biologic agents. The chimeric monoclonal anti-TNF alpha antibody infliximab, is the first such "biological" introduced into this therapeutic arena since few years.

This first meeting on current Italian research in the field of inflammatory bowel disease has been though to create the opportunity for the assembly of emerging national researchers and clinicians within the field of IBD. All speakers presented their latest results in their specific field of research or clinical practice. The scientific program of the meeting addressed exciting new developments, focusing, in particular, on the genotype-phenotype analyses, the immunity-inflammation related processes, the modern diagnostic approaches, the traditional and novel therapeutic options.

We hope that this meeting will become an usual annual appointment for all the italian bench and clinical IBD investigators.

Prof. GIOVANNI GASBARRINI  
Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology  
Catholic University of Rome (Italy)

Prof. PAOLO POLA  
Internal Medicine and Angiology  
Catholic University of Rome (Italy)