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DIGESTIVE DEASESE UPDATE: Gastroenterologists throughout Canada and from around the world recently journeyed to Banff, Alta., to attend the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology's annual Canadian Digestive Disease Week (CDDW) meeting. No doubt, many also took advantage of the world-class skiing the area offers. *Medical Post* staff writer David Hodges attended the meeting and files these reports.

CDDW: Acute pediatric pancreatitis on the rise

Part of increase in diagnoses may be attributable to increased awareness and enzyme testing

By David Hodges

BANFF, ALTA. | The incidence of acute pancreatitis is steadily rising among children, a nine-year retrospective review conducted at a university-affiliated tertiary care pediatric hospital in Pennsylvania suggests.

The study, presented at the meeting here, showed that the absolute number of cases increased by 400% at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh between 1993 and 2004, a time during which the hospital's catchment population in the 23 surrounding counties decreased by 6.3%, from 882,000 to 826,500 children.

Although multiple studies have shown an increase in acute pancreatitis incidence for adults over the past four decades, "pediatric data have been sparse, with only one series based on a single year of diagnosis," said lead study author Dr. Veronique Morinville, a gastroenterology fellow at McGill University and the Montreal Children's Hospital, in a poster presentation.

More amylase, lipase testing

"There is uncertainty whether pediatric acute pancreatitis incidence is truly increasing, or if the increase results from increased awareness leading to more amylase and lipase testing or from an increased pediatric population."

Doctors at the Pittsburgh hospital recorded 1,021 discharge diagnoses of acute pancreatitis during the study period, with the number of cases lowest in 1993 at 28 and increasing to a high of 141 in 2004.

There was also an increasing trend for pancreatic enzyme testing—from a low of 3,321 in 1995 to a high of 8,621 in 2004 for amylase, and a low of 2,612 in 1993 to a high of 7,569 in 2004 for lipase (increasing rates of 160% and 190%, respectively).

"The reason for the escalation in diagnosing acute pancreatitis cannot be explained by an increased rate of pancreatic enzyme testing alone, although the possibility of this or other factors acting in an additive fashion has not been studied," Dr. Morinville concluded.

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