

AUTHOR COMMENTARIES - From Special Topics

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Paolo Gionchetti

From the Special Topic of **Probiotics**

*In our Special Topics analysis of probiotics research over the past decade, the work of Dr. Paolo Gionchetti ranks at #3 by total cites, based on 31 papers cited a total of 2,114 times. His record in **Essential Science Indicators**SM from **Thomson Reuters** includes 77 papers, the majority of which are classified in the field of Clinical Medicine, cited a total of 3,061 times between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 2009.*

Dr. Gionchetti is a Researcher and Assistant Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology at the University of Bologna. He is on the editorial board of the International Journal of Probiotics and Prebiotics and serves as a reviewer on several other journals.

Below, ScienceWatch.com talks with Dr. Gionchetti about his highly cited work.

SW: Would you tell us a bit about your educational background and research experiences?

I've been trained in Bologna as well as in Oxford, England. I'm Assistant Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology at the University of Bologna; I also work in the Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Unit. My research interests include IBD pathogenesis, assessment, and treatment.

SW: What first drew your interest to probiotics?

My interest in probiotics started around 1995-96 when I was looking at the relationship between intestinal flora and pathogenesis of IBD.

SW: Your most-cited cited clinical paper in our analysis is the 2000 *Gastroenterology* paper, "Oral bacteriotherapy as maintenance treatment in patients with chronic pouchitis: A double-blind, placebo-controlled trial," (Gionchetti P, *et al.*, 119[2]: 305-9, August 2000). Would you tell us about this study

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and why you think it has been so highly cited?

This paper was the first double-blind, placebo-controlled paper showing the efficacy of probiotics in IBD. Pouchitis can be considered as a recurrence of IBD in patients operated on for ulcerative colitis. We showed that using probiotics was effective in preventing relapses of pouchitis compared with placebo.

"I think that probiotics will become widely used in clinical practice..."

SW: Based on your list of papers, you've done a lot of studies dealing specifically with the VSL#3 probiotic preparation. Would you talk a little about this aspect of your work?

VSL#3 is a peculiar preparation of probiotics, very highly concentrated (450 billion bacteria per sachet, and we used 1,800 billion bacteria per day!) and containing a cocktail of different strains of probiotics. In our work, we also have shown for the first time the intestinal colonization by this preparation.

SW: Are probiotics more accepted as a therapeutic option in gastroenterological diseases today than they were a decade ago?

I'm sure that probiotics are more widely accepted as a possible helpful option in many gastroenterological conditions, although I think there is still a lot to do.

We need to specify that probiotics are highly different among them, because of the different bacteria and the different dosage of bacteria contained in each preparation; in fact, each bacterium possesses different mechanisms of action and function.

SW: Where do you see probiotics going in the next decade?

I think that probiotics will become widely used in clinical practice although we need further and more controlled studies to allow probiotics to become a more accepted therapeutic option in gastroenterology. ■

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Paolo Gionchetti's current most-cited paper in *Essential Science Indicators*, with 556 cites:

Gionchetti P, *et al.*, "Oral bacteriotherapy as maintenance treatment in patients with chronic pouchitis: A double-blind, placebo-controlled trial," *Gastroenterology* 119(2): 305-9, August 2000. Source: *Essential Science Indicators* from Thomson Reuters.

KEYWORDS: PROBIOTICS, INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASES, POUCHITIS, ULCERATIVE COLITIS, RELAPSES, VSL#3 PROBIOTIC PREPARATION, INTESTINAL COLONIZATION, CONTROLLED STUDIES, GASTROENTEROLOGY.



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