CELIAC DISEASE

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Celiac disease (CD), or gluten sensitive enteropathy, is an immune- mediated enteropathy with a wide range of clinical manifestations of variable severity. The disease is triggered by the ingestion of prolamins (alcohol soluble fractions) of wheat, barley and rye in genetically susceptible subjects. CD is currently regarded as a paradigm of autoimmune disease for which the main genetic predisposition (HLA-DQ2/DQ8), the exogenous trigger (gluten) and one of the autoantigens (TTG) are known. At present, the only available treatment is a strict gluten free diet. During the last decade we have witnessed new scientific developments that lead to a better understanding of the molecular basis for the pathophysiology and clinical manifestations of CD. These new findings also open new opportunities for potential treatments alternative to the gluten free diet. This lecture will provide an overview of the epidemiology, clinical presentations, and diagnostic aspects of CD and will briefly summarize new findings that may have an impact on future therapeutic options for CD.