Many patients find that their motility disease or disorder goes through different phases. They may experience periods of exacerbation, which can last for hours, days, months, or years. They may then find that the disease goes through a reprise phase where symptoms are no longer exacerbated, but are somewhat tolerable. Again, these episodes of reprise can last for hours, days, months, or years.

Patients with digestive motility diseases and disorders may also suffer from numerous non-digestive symptoms as well.

Because some digestive motility diseases and disorders are rare, this can compound the problem of trying to make others understand what the patient is going through. It may also be difficult to diagnose or find a physician qualified in this specialized area of gastroenterology.

Specialized motility tests may be recommended in order to acquire a definitive diagnosis and assessment of the motility severity. These tests may vary according to the type of motility disease or disorder suspected.

Those having a chronic digestive motility disease or disorder may also suffer from periods of depression due to the many changes and adjustments in their lives.

Digestive motility diseases and disorders can impact every aspect of the patient’s life as well as his/her family and other relationships.

It’s important to know that patients are not alone in their suffering and that support, education, and assistance are available.

It is also important for patients who suspect that they may have a motility problem, or even for those who already have a definitive diagnosis of one, to see a physician who is knowledgeable in this specialized area of gastroenterology.

The information contained in this educational brochure should be used as a reference only. Patients are urged to contact their physician regarding any concerns or questions relating to their health or the material presented in this publication.

The content of this brochure has been reviewed by members of the AGMD Medical and Scientific Advisory Board.

For further information concerning AGMD, membership, and digestive motility diseases and disorders, contact the AGMD International Corporate Headquarters.
In normal digestion, food and liquid are propelled though the digestive tract by rhythmic, wave-like, coordinated contractions or propulsion called peristalsis. When someone suffers from a digestive motility disease or disorder, peristalsis becomes impaired.

Digestive motility diseases and disorders can affect the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, anorectum, and biliary systems. In certain cases, the bladder may also be affected.

Digestive motility diseases and disorders may affect any one portion or the entire digestive tract.

Digestive motility diseases may affect the muscles of the digestive tract (myopathic) or the nerves of the digestive tract (neuropathic).

Digestive motility diseases and disorders may be primary or secondary. If they are primary, there is no underlying disease or condition causing the motility problem. If they are secondary, the impaired motility occurs as a result of an underlying medical problem. Examples of secondary causes include: diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, scleroderma, lupus, muscular dystrophy, endocrine disorders, neurological disorders, etc.

Some digestive motility diseases and disorders may be familial, which means they are genetic in nature.

Digestive motility diseases and disorders may be idiopathic meaning there is no known cause.

Although not always the case, certain patients may experience a progression of their digestive motility disease or disorder to other parts of their digestive tract.

Some patients can remain fairly functional with their digestive motility disease or disorder, while others may be greatly debilitated.

There are many different types of digestive motility diseases and disorders. Some examples include irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), chronic diarrhea, chronic constipation, achalasia, chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction, Hirschsprung’s Disease and gastroparesis.

Digestive motility diseases and disorders can affect people of all ages. Impaired motility can be evident at birth, during childhood, or during adulthood. They may affect people of any ethnic background and any gender.

In some instances, there may be an overlapping of symptoms related to other diseases.

In many cases of motility disorders, the patient may not even look ill. This can bring about numerous misconceptions concerning the severity of these disorders and also their very existence.

Some may wrongly feel that because many of these are “invisible illnesses” the problem may be stemming from the patient’s own imaginings.

Weight is not necessarily a good and reliable indicator of how a digestive motility patient is feeling. It’s important to note that some people with motility problems may be underweight, while others are normal weight. Still, there are some who are heavy or even obese.

Digestive motility diseases and disorders are not imagined or caused specifically by stress.

Patients with digestive motility diseases and disorders can suffer from acute and chronic pain.

In many cases, patients with motility diseases and disorders suffer from erratic and unpredictable symptoms.

Because digestive motility diseases can affect the ability or inability to eat and also because some motility problems can cause bathroom issues, they can have a great social impact in the patient’s life.