2.2 Hiding in plain sight: Gastrointestinal Infections with Minimal Histological Findings

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Upper and lower endoscopies are commonly performed to evaluate the gastrointestinal (GI) tract in patients with GI symptoms, such as abdominal pain and diarrhea. In patients with GI infections, biopsies are often intensely inflamed or ulcerated. However, some GI infections produce surprisingly little inflammation and can even show nearly normal histological features. A high level of suspicion, particularly in specific patient populations, is necessary to recognize these infections and to order the appropriate ancillary investigation to arrive at the correct diagnosis.

This presentation will discuss several GI infections and their risk factors, with an emphasis on those infections that are easily overlooked, due to having subtle histological findings. Ancillary techniques to confirm the diagnosis will be reviewed, as appropriate.

Educational Objectives

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe GI infections that produce relatively mild inflammatory changes in GI tract mucosal biopsies.
2. Discuss the use of appropriate ancillary studies and reporting considerations for selected GI infections.
3. State the importance that patient population plays in the search for specific infections in the GI tract.