The current state-of-the-art surgical alternative, laparoscopic Nissen fundoplication, "is a pretty good operation," Dr. Smith said. "The gold standard … is going to have to be unseated before any of the endoluminal therapies gain acceptance."

The EndoCinch suturing system by Bard Medical Inc., which cinches the lower esophageal sphincter, is not highly efficacious, according to Dr. Smith. Results of using the EndoCinch system at the Mayo Clinic parallel those of published studies, revealing that just 25%-38% of GERD patients are able to discontinue proton pump inhibitor (PPI) medications following the procedure.

The Plicator device from NDO Surgical Inc. has had better outcomes, with studies showing that more than half of patients can stop taking PPIs and experience significant improvements in their health-related quality of life after they have been treated with the jawlike device.

Results of Stretta trials were promising; although results were not seen after 6 months, outcomes were better at 12-month follow-up evaluations. This may be because, following the radiofrequency ablation to the deep submucosal space at the lower esophageal sphincter, collagen deposition needed time to mature.

Dr. Smith disclosed that he is on the scientific advisory committee for Endogastric Solutions Inc., manufacturer of the EsophyX device, currently available only in Europe. This device allows the operator to isolate the distal esophagus with suction.

The EsophyX then is advanced into the stomach, where it partially retroflexes to allow placement of fasteners around the circumference of the esophagus.

In one study of 84 patients treated using the EsophyX, 77 were no longer taking PPI medications 3 months after the procedure, he said. ■

IBD Information Resource Available

The Crohn's and Colitis Foundation has a new information resource center that is designed to give support and information about those diseases to patients and physicians. It is staffed by public health educators with advanced degrees.

Interpretation services are offered for 170 languages. To get more information, call 888-MY-GUT-PAIN (888-694-8872) or visit the Web site at www.ccfa.org. The information center can also be contacted by sending an e-mail to info@ccfa.org. ■