Inflammatory bowel diseases, comprising the two major entities Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, are diseases of unknown aetiology characterized by severe, chronic intestinal inflammation. This thesis studied time trends in the epidemiology and natural history of Crohn’s disease in the Örebro primary uptake area during 1963-2010. The incidence of Crohn’s disease seems to be on the increase, and the prevalence is high. The proportion of patients with uncomplicated disease at diagnosis is increasing, and the proportion of patients progressing to complications within five years from diagnosis is decreasing. During the same period after diagnosis, the proportion of patients that receive immunomodulators has increased, and the requirement for surgery has decreased.

Environmental influences might have contributed to increased faecal calprotectin and subclinical inflammation in healthy relatives of inflammatory bowel disease patients. Consecutive monitoring of faecal calprotectin in patients in clinical remission is useful for prediction of relapse.