



What is FND?

Functional Neurological Disorder [FND] is where the nervous system malfunctions in absence of identifiable physical illness: MRI scans, EEGs, etc., are normal. It is not known how or why FND occurs, but recent scans of brain activity indicate dysfunction in brain areas controlling planning and initiation of movement and self-agency.

FND can affect men, women and children and is the second most common diagnosis after headaches accounting for up to 1/3 of neurological outpatients.

The same level of respect and care should be given to FND patients just as any other patient with any other diagnosis. Patient rights and medical ethics do not change when the diagnosis is FND.

Interim Wellbeing

Patients who visit FND Hope's healthy living section will find multiple resources on balancing life, eating well, exercise tips and joining a peer-to-peer support group.

Common Symptoms

FND is as common as MS and Parkinson's. FND may result in similar levels of disability and impairments in quality of life.

FND can present with:

- Weakness
- Sensory changes
- Movement disorders
- Seizures
- Gait and balance difficulties
- Cognitive deficits
- Chronic pain
- Sleep disturbances
- Bladder and bowel problems

Treatment

Currently, a multidisciplinary approach is the most successful treatment, which includes training the brain in the form of physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Some patients find Psychological therapy helpful. While medication can alleviate some symptoms, there are currently no quick fixes for FND.

The most common misconception is that patients are in control of some or all of their symptoms. However, brain scans provide evidence of functional changes, which are distinct from feigning.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of FND should be made on the basis of positive features, Hoovers sign and not on the absence of disease or negative test results.

It is now thought that although trauma/stress can be relevant for some patients such factors are not found in a significant proportion.

What's in a Label?

There is a great deal of confusion surrounding the many diagnostic terms used for the same set of functional symptoms, which include Conversion Disorder and Dissociative Disorder. This leaves many patients perplexed about their diagnosis. FND is increasingly becoming the preferred term amongst specialists as the term is more neutral about the cause and mechanism of the disorder.