

Acute Services Division



Information about ...

# Functional Neurological Symptoms

## What are Functional Neurological Symptoms?

Approximately one third of all patients who attend Neurology will receive a diagnosis of Functional Neurological Symptoms. This condition is also called 'medically unexplained neurological symptoms' (MUNS).

## What are the symptoms?

This common condition covers a range of different symptoms but usually people experience changes in their ability to move and feel their limbs. This can include difficulty with walking, balance, problems controlling and moving the arms and hands, and experiencing odd or unpleasant sensations from the body like tingling or pain. These symptoms can 'come and go' or be there most of the time and can be distressing.

The difference between functional neurological symptoms and other neurological conditions you may have heard of like, 'multiple sclerosis' or motor neurone disease', is that this condition **is not caused by a disease of the central nervous system** (your brain, spine, and nerves). The **structure** of your body is still working well and has no damage but the **function** of it is not working. This condition can be difficult to understand and we appreciate you will have lots of questions that we can help answer. A good way to try and understand this is by thinking of what happens when a computer malfunctions. If a computer breaks down it is often due to a problem with the '**software**' (the programming that makes the computer function) and not the '**hardware**' (the monitor, keyboard). You can think of functional neurological symptoms in this way. The **hardware** of your body (brain, and nerves) are not damaged, however the **software** of your body is not working as well as it should.

## **How can my neurologist be sure I have this condition?**

Your neurologist will have taken a very detailed clinical examination of your symptoms and a history (your story) of how these symptoms have developed and progressed. From this clinical examination alone a neurologist can start to make sense of what might be occurring and causing your symptoms. We like to be as sure as we can that your symptoms are not caused by a disease and your neurologist may use tests such as scans to 'look' inside your body to make sure everything is working well. Your neurologist will know what tests you need to have done if any.

Neurologists are then able to reach a diagnosis of functional neurological symptoms by excluding (ruling out) other diseases which may cause your symptoms

## **I have this condition. What happens now?**

When your neurologist has gathered all the information they need to make a diagnosis of functional neurological symptoms, they will meet and discuss this with you. They will explain how they have reached this diagnosis and discuss any test results with you.

You will have the opportunity to ask questions as this is often a condition that is difficult for people to understand. You may want to have a family member or friend present with you at this meeting.

After your neurologist explains the diagnosis to you there are several things that can happen next.

You may choose to take some time to understand and read about this condition and your neurologist can signpost you to further information. There are people who get better from

just having the diagnosis explained clearly and do not need any further help.

For some people the functional neurological symptoms may be having more of an impact in their lives and causing emotional distress. It is not unusual to feel worried, anxious, and low. There are further ways we can help. The neurologists can refer you to an **Integrated Team** who are specialists in helping people understand and recover from these symptoms.

## **The Integrated Team**

This team is made up of neurologists, psychiatrists, neuropsychologists, and physiotherapists who have expertise in this area.

Some patients may benefit from working with a physiotherapist to help them walk better and some people may benefit from working with a neuropsychologist who can help you cope with the difficulties you are having and help you recover.

### **Integrated Team:**

#### **Neurologists**

- Dr Saif Razvi
- Dr Roseanne Murray
- Dr Pushkar Shah

#### **Neuropsychologists**

- Dr Sue Copstick
- Dr Steven Meldrum

#### **Psychiatrist**

- Dr Adam Burnel

## **Physiotherapists**

Ms Audrey Matthews

Ms Melanie Brown

## **How do I get this further help?**

Your neurologist will talk to you about the options that you have and if you feel ready for more help with your condition, they will make a referral to the Integrated Team. The integrated team will then review your case and decide how best to help you.

**Further information: [www.muns.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.muns.scot.nhs.uk)**







Review Date: October 2015



MIS 265666