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Useful Websites:

www.neurosymptoms.org

www.nonepilepticattacks.info

Charities: FND Hope, FND Action



The Brain Charity offers emotional support, practical help, and social activities to anyone with a neurological condition. We also provide support for family, friends and carers.

Tel: 0151 298 2999

For practical advice our Patient Experience Team can be of assistance.

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The Walton Centre 
NHS Foundation Trust

Functional Motor Disorder



Your questions answered

Neurology

0151 556 3510

Excellence in Neuroscience



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What is functional motor disorder?

It is a common condition where people experience abnormalities of control of movement, for example weakness of limbs, walking difficulties, tremors, jerks or abnormal posture of the limbs.

There is a very specific problem with how the brain is working. The 'basic wiring' of the nervous system is intact and can work. There is no problem with motivation or will to move normally. Instead, the problem lies in the person's ability to control their body. The messages cannot get through in a normal way. The symptoms are real and are not 'put on' or 'all in the mind'. Functional motor disorder (FMD) is part of a wider group of conditions called 'Functional Neurological Disorder' (FND).

How many people have FMD?

Not many people have heard of FMD and it can be misunderstood by health professionals and the public. This might make you think it is rare. However, it is one of the most common reasons for someone to see a neurologist.

What causes FMD?

It's a complex question. And one that medical science is learning more about every year. What we do know is that there is probably not one single cause and everyone is different. However,

there is one important feature of what goes wrong in FMD. That when the person's attention (awareness) is on their body, their symptoms are worse.

Attention and FMD

It is a really important feature of what goes wrong in FMD. By attention we mean where the brain's thoughts and awareness is focused (its spotlight). When the person's attention is distracted away from their body, their movement becomes more normal. This can help explain why FMD symptoms can vary over a short period of time.

How is the diagnosis made?

It is usually made by a neurologist or similar specialist doctor. The symptoms of FMD can look very similar to symptoms seen in structural neurological disease (like stroke). But when examined closely they have important differences. It is these differences that tell the neurologist the symptoms are due to FMD. People with FMD have normal scans and other tests (may show signs of normal wear or tear). Some common signs are:

- Collapsing weakness – limb gets weaker the more you try.
- A dragging kind of walk.
- A difference between power of the limbs on the bed and when walking. Some

people can have relatively normal strength in the legs on the bed but weak legs when walking. The reverse can be true.

- Tremor – one that changes speed. Is sometimes absent.

Will I get better?

Unfortunately there is no quick fix. If recovery was quick and easy you would probably be better by now. However people with FND can recover fully. On the other hand, some people have very persistent and disabling symptoms. Physiotherapy and psychology can help some people.

What can I do to help myself?

It is important to come to terms with the diagnosis of functional symptoms. It is difficult for people to get better if they continue to look for a structural explanation for their symptoms. Talking to friends and family about your symptoms and how you feel can be very helpful.

What happens if my movement problem does not improve?

We think it is most likely you will see some improvement with treatment. However, if the treatment makes no difference, your neurologist may consider alternative treatment options.