



Why do doctors struggle with Medically Unexplained Symptoms?



**RACP
CONGRESS
2018**
Sydney
14 – 16 May 2018

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Fibromyalgia Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS) Chronic fatigue syndrome
Widespread chronic pain Multiple chemical sensitivity
Irritable bowel syndrome Irritable bladder syndrome Chronic pelvic pain
Functional gastrointestinal disorders Non-cardiac chest pain **Tinnitus**
Functional neurological disorders Chronic Headache Migraine
Gulf War syndrome Endogenous Depression Regional Sympathetic dystrophy
Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) Temporomandibular Disorder

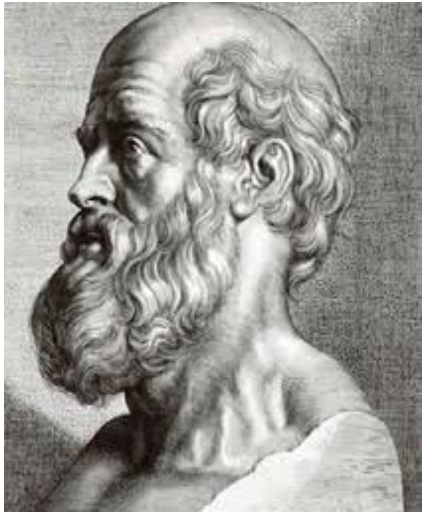


Referrals to a tertiary hospital: a window into clinical management issues in functional gastrointestinal disorders.

Ecushla Linedale, Muhammad Shahad et al
JGH Open (An open access journal of gastroenterology) 2017 1-8



Ars Longa Vita Brevis

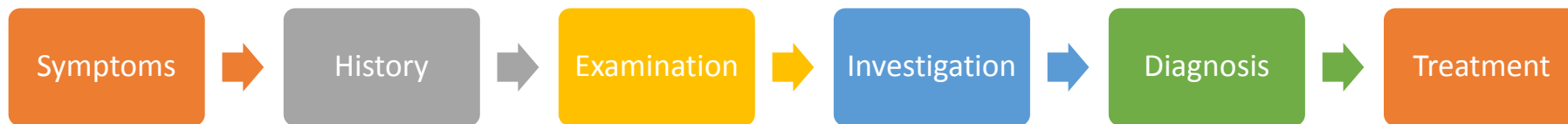


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Medical Model:





Medical Model:



BUT up to 30% of presentations to GPs are for Medically Unexplained Symptoms

Medically Unexplained Symptoms in Primary Care

Else Guthrie

Advances in Psychiatric Treatment (2008), vol. 14, 432–440 Journal of Clinical Psychology 1998



... and 27% of attendances at secondary care clinics

Medically unexplained symptoms in frequent attenders of secondary health care: retrospective cohort study

Steven Reid et al
BMJ 2001;322;767



The Medical Model views disability as a feature of the person, directly caused by disease, trauma or other health condition, which requires medical care provided in the form of individual treatments by doctors

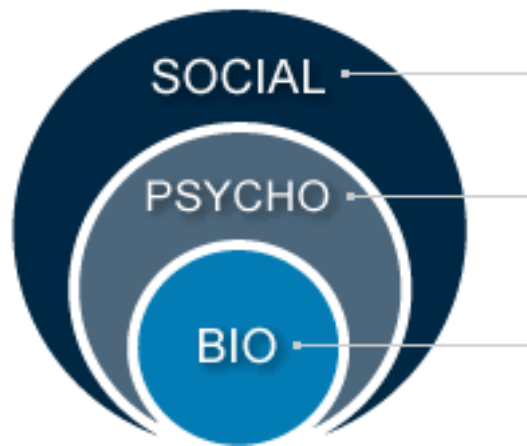
The more useful model might be called the **Biopsychosocial model**

World Health Organisation, Geneva, 2002



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World Health Organisation, Geneva, 2002



The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine

Dr George Engel 1977 (Science Vol 196)

Dr Engel heard colleagues saying:

“Medicine appears neat and tidy. It has a firm base in the biological sciences”

“(We would) do well to finally embrace for once and for all the medical model of disease”

“(We should) concentrate on the ‘real’ diseases and not get lost in the psychosocial underbrush... *(focus on the)* organic elements of disease rather than the psychosocial elements of human malfunctioning”



The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine

George Engel 1977 (Science Vol 196)

“The dominant model of disease today is biomedical, and it leaves no room within its framework for the social, psychological and behavioural dimensions of illness.

A biopsychosocial model is proposed that provides a blueprint for action in the real world of healthcare”



The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine

George Engel 1977 (Science Vol 196)

“Whether it will be useful or not remains to be seen. But the answer will not be forthcoming if conditions are not provided to do so.”



Endogenous Depression

“The dominant biomedical narrative of depression... is short-sighted and insufficient... This is a widespread and systemic public health and human rights issue which demands urgent reconsideration.

Regrettably, recent decades have been marked with excessive medicalization of mental health and over-use of biomedical interventions....
Medical students and doctors have been misinformed”

Dr Dainius Puras

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

World Health Day, 2017



Medically Unexplained Symptoms in Primary Care

Else Guthrie

Advances in Psychiatric Treatment (2008), vol. 14, 432–440,
Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1998

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ee93/c5c5287f219cc1ad2980b07789e290362f92.pdf>

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Childhood trauma and stress and fibromyalgia – is there a connection?

Dr David Brady

<https://www.fibrofix.com/blogs/news/childhood-trauma-and-stress-and-fibromyalgia-is-there-a-connection>

Psychological trauma and functional somatic syndromes: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Niloofar Afari et al. Psychosom Med. 2014; 76(1): 2-11

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“Thank you for writing about it in this way. When I heard fibromyalgia was linked to childhood trauma in the past, it always sounded like another version of “It’s all in your head” because the physical basis was not explained. It was said as though the fibromyalgia was a psychological symptom rather than a physiological process.”

S Reynolds

“This explains so much in a manor (sic) that I could understand. I went through childhood trauma and extreme physical and mental abuse from my mother. It has been a lifelong battle repairing that issue. I have Fibromylagia, IBS and chronic pain.”

Kristin Stone



Health is the condition of being well or free from disease.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online 2016

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Health is the condition of being well or free from disease.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online 2016

Health is the ability to adapt and self-manage in the face of social, physical and emotional challenges.

Machteld Huber et al. BMJ July 2011



Health is the ability to adapt and self-manage in the face of life's challenges

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Health is living life more purposefully,
leading lives that are worth living.

Dr David Pencheon RACP Congress 2018

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Maori Model of Health – Te Whare Tapa Wha

Sir Mason Durie 1984





What if?

The Medical Model is reductionist, predicated on symptoms being linked to a diagnosis in order to provide “treatment”?

Our training does not equip us to manage MUS (up to 30% in 1^o and 2^o)

“Diseases”, including MUS are significantly related to our life experience, and are manifestations of dis-ease in our bodies understood best by the biopsychosocial model

Ars Longa Vita Brevis – the art of medicine is to apply the science in the context of a person’s whole life



Future State:

A new model of (multidisciplinary) medical practice which empowers people, with compassion, to find **Health** in all domains of their lives – Physical, Psychological, Family and Spiritual:

To adapt and self-manage in the face of life's challenges

Living life more purposefully, leading lives that are worth living