Health Professionals Should No Longer Doubt That Fibromyalgia is Real

Fibromyalgia is a difficult condition to understand because it affects different people in different ways. Though fibromyalgia awareness is spreading and more research is being done every year fibromyalgia is still considered a “controversial” diagnosis by some in the medical profession.

This poses a problem for those of us who have it. Not only because of all the myths that surround the condition but also because some people, health professionals and people with it, are unsure of what to call it:

Is it a condition? A disease? Or simply a diagnosis?

Sometimes people not believing in fibromyalgia can actually stem from a misunderstanding. There are a number of reputable doctors and researchers that believe that fibromyalgia is not a disease, but they are not entirely sure what it is.

Unfortunately, the reality is that fibromyalgia is real and there are many sufferers who do not know where to turn to for answers.

 If a patient is brushed off by their GP, the patient should ask for a second opinion and suggest that the GP make a referral for them to see a Rheumatologist. If a patient feels that their GP is not listening to them this can cause a breakdown in the relationship between the patient and medical professional. When this happens some patients even begin to doubt themselves.

The NHS expects all members of staff who are employed by them to listen and respond to a patient to the best of their ability. However sometimes, this does not happen. If you find that there are major problems in the relationship between yourself and members of your medical care team you may wish to talk to someone who is employed especially to help you. These servicesare employed to listen to patients, their relatives, carers and friends, and answer their questions and resolve their concerns as quickly as possible.

* NHS England & Wales - Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
* NHS Scotland – Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)
* NHS Northern Ireland – Patient and Client Council (PCC)

Fibromyalgia is certainly not a life threatening illness but is surely life changing. Symptoms fluctuate from hour to hour and day to day and may worsen with changes in barometric pressure, humidity, cold or heat. It can be very frustrating and a little scary at times. It is a condition that is invisible to others, however research supports that FM is a distinct clinical syndrome. FM is formally recognised by the Department of Health and is listed on the NHS website.

There are several medical based websites that carry well documented information about fibromyalgia, notably:

* NHS England www.nhs.uk
* NHS Scotland [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/conditions/fibromyalgia)
* NHS Wales www.wales.nhs.uk
* NHS Northern Ireland [www.online.hscni.net](http://www.online.hscni.net)
* Bupa [www.bupa.co.uk](http://www.bupa.co.uk)
* British Medical Journal [www.bmj.co.uk](http://www.bmj.co.uk)
* British Society for Rheumatology www.rheumatology.oxfordjournals.com

The WHO (World Health Organization) has recognised fibromyalgia.

Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) has recognised fibromyalgia

The Government recognises fibromyalgia as a real and potentially disabling condition

The European Parliament has recognised fibromyalgia

It is hard to know how to deal with it when someone looks you in the eye and tells you the condition that has had such a huge impact on your life does not exist. Unfortunately this is not at all an uncommon reaction. Fibromyalgia is often called the “invisible illness” because people who have fibromyalgia look perfectly healthy.

Unsurprisingly, if you are speaking openly about the state of your health you are always going to come upon the people, who do not believe what you are saying. Whenever you are dealing with people questioning your condition, your symptoms or your honesty it is usually their ignorance of the illness that causes them to question what you are saying. They may react by narrowing their eyes, raising one eyebrow or shaking their heads.

If a patient has a good relationship with their health professional care team their outlook usually is positive and they become proactive. They are willing to take ownership of their own management plan. They understand that fibromyalgia will not cause degenerative joints; at times the symptoms could be debilitating but with exercise, proper nutrition, self management and medications, a person with fibromyalgia can continue their life living it to their fullest.

Michael McNett, MD states *“Numerous studies have shown alterations in biochemical and neurological functioning in FMS, including high concentrations of chemicals associated with pain in the spinal fluid, increased activity in pain-processing nerves in the spinal cord, and marked increases in activity in the brain areas where pain is perceived. These studies are irrefutable, and those doctors who persist in believing that FM is a purely psychosocial condition do so in obvious disregard of the facts”.*

The majority of research over the past two decades indicates that fibromyalgia is a real PHYSICAL condition*.*