

MEDICALLY UNEXPLAINED SYMPTOMS IN NEUROLOGY

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Medically unexplained symptoms in neurology (MUS) is a heterogeneous group of disorders which lack identified biological basis and are assumed to have a psychological origin. They are diagnosed by exclusion of an organic basis, as well as exclusion of feigning. MUS symptoms can be either positive (such as "epileptic" seizures) or negative (e.g. weakness). They can be accompanied by apathy (such as "la belle indifference") or extreme anxiety (PTSD). The assumptions that all "functional" symptoms are psychogenic, and therefore can only respond to psychiatric therapy, has not been validated.

The separation of "organic" from "psychogenic" symptoms parallels the philosophical school of dualism (vs monism), implying that some processes are due to "mental" processes which are not physical.

The diagnosis of MUS requires exclusion of malingering and factitious disorders. It is almost impossible to prove the existence of feigning, and in many cases even a "malingerer" may believe there is a justified source of the abnormality.

Treatment of MUS is disappointing.