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# Functional syndromes

## A bird's eye review of the recent literature

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*Edited by Dan Buskila*

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### Reviews

**Author:** Yunus MB

**Title:** Central sensitivity syndromes a new paradigm and group nosology for fibromyalgia and overlapping conditions and the related issue of disease versus illness.

*Semin Arthritis Rheum* 2008; 37: 339-52.

**Summary:** The author concludes that central sensitivity syndrome (CSS) seems to be a useful paradigm and an appropriate terminology for fibromyalgia syndrome and related conditions. It was suggested that the concept of CSS is likely to promote research, education, and proper patient management.

**Authors:** Tark LM, Riese M, de Bock GH, Manoharan A, Kok IC, Rosmalen JG.

**Title:** As good as it gets? A meta-analysis and systematic review of methodological quality of heart rate variability studies in functional somatic disorders.

*Biol Psychol* 2009, [Epub ahead of print]

**Summary:** This is a meta-analysis and systematic review of methodological study quality on the association between cardiac autonomic nervous system (ANS) dysfunction, measured as parasympathetic nervous system activity using heart rate variability, and functional somatic disorders (FSD).

It was concluded that current available evidence is not adequate to firmly reject or accept a role of ANS dysfunction in FSD.

**Authors:** Olde Hartman TC, Borghuis MS, Lucassen PL, Van de Laar FA, Speckens AE, van Weel C.

**Title:** Medically unexplained symptoms, summarisation disorder and hypochondriasis: course and prognosis. A systematic review.

*J Psychosom Res* 2009; 66: 363-377.

**Summary:** A systematic review focusing on patients with medically unexplained symptoms (MUS), somatisation disorder, and hypochondriasis, and assessing prognostic factors.

The authors concluded that due to the limited numbers of studies and their high heterogeneity, there is a lack of rigorous empirical evidence to identify relevant prognostic factors in patients presenting persistent MUS.

### Epidemiology

**Authors:** Almansa C, Rey E, Sanchez RG, Sanchez AA, Diaz-Rubio M.

**Title:** Prevalence of functional gastrointestinal disorders in patients with fibromyalgia and the role of psychological distress.

*Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2009; 7: 438-45.

**Summary:** The prevalence of functional gastrointestinal disorders (FGID) was studied in 100 Spanish fibromyalgia (FM) patients and 100 matched controls. Ninety-eight percent of patients with fibromyalgia had at least one FGID, compared with only 39% of controls. FM was correlated most highly with irritable bowel syndrome.

An increased degree of psychological distress in these patients was proposed to predispose them to FGID.

**Authors:** Jiang X, Locke GR 3<sup>rd</sup>, Choung RS, Zinsmeister AR, Schleck CD, Talley NJ.

**Title:** Prevalence and risk factors for abdominal bloating and visible distention. A population-based study.

*Gut* 2008; 57: 756-63.

**Summary:** The authors aimed to evaluate the prevalence and potential risk factors of abdominal bloating and visible distention separately in a representative US population, and their association with other FGIDs.

It was found that bloating and distention are common and have similar risk factors, somatisation probably plays a role.

### Subgroups

**Authors:** Eriksson EM, Andren KI, Eriksson HT, Kurlbery GK.

**Title:** Irritable bowel syndrome subtypes differ in body awareness, psychological symptoms and biochemical stress markers.

*World J Gastroenterol* 2008; 14: 4889-96.

**Summary:** Functional somatic syndromes are not homogenous disorders. In this study, IBS subtypes showed different profiles in body awareness, somatic and psychological symptoms and in biochemical variables. Diarrhea predominant IBS differed compared to the other groups by lowered body awareness, less psychological symptoms and a higher sense of coherence and elevated C-peptide values.

The other subtypes (constipation and alternating IBS) suffered more from depression and anxiety.

### Pathophysiology

**Authors:** Geisser ME, Strader Donnell C, Petzke F, Gracely RH, Clauw DJ, Williams DA.

**Title:** Comorbid somatic syndromes and functional status in patients with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome: sensory amplification as a common mechanism.

*Psychosomatics* 2008; 49: 235-42.

**Summary:** A composite measure of sensory sensitivity was created and compared with measures of somatic symptoms, comorbid psychological disturbances, and self-reported physical functioning in 38 patients with FM and/or CFS.

It was found that sensory amplification may be an underlying pathophysiological mechanism in these disorders that is relatively independent of depression and depressive symptoms.

**Authors:** Kato K, Sullivan PF, Evengard B, Pedersen NL.

**Title:** A population-based twin study of functional somatic syndromes.

*Psychol Med* 2009; 39: 497-505.

**Summary:** The authors aimed to examine how the co-morbidity of functional syndromes is influenced by genetic and environmental factors that are in common to the syndromes. A total of 31318 twins in the Swedish Twin Registry under-

went screening interviews assessing 4 functional somatic syndromes and 2 psychiatric disorders. It was concluded that the co occurrence of functional somatic syndromes in women can be best explained by affective and sensory components in common to all these syndromes, as well as by unique influences specific to each of them.

**Authors:** Pukhalsky AL, Shmarina GV, Alioshkin VA, Sabelnikov A.

**Title:** HPA axis exhaustion and regulatory T-cell accumulation in patients with a functional somatic syndrome: recent view on the problem of Gulf War veterans.

*J Neuroimmunol* 2008; 196: 133-8.

**Summary:** The authors assume that physical and mental symptoms of functional somatic syndromes are based on both under-activity of HPA axis and excessive accumulation of regulatory T cells.