

Fibromyalgia: Myths and Realities

Louise Plaisance, DNS, RN-BC
Associate Dean, Nursing
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, TX

Facts about Fibromyalgia

- Affects 5-10 million in the US
- 90% are females
- Usually presents during middle age
- More common in those with autoimmune disorders
- People with FMS look healthy
- Not progressive; doesn't lead to other conditions
- The course of fibromyalgia varies greatly
- Contributes to pain, depression and lack of sleep
 - affects relationships
 - Affects job performance

• Source: MayoClinic.com

What is Fibromyalgia?

- A chronic, painful syndrome
- Not a disease
- Widespread pain in muscles and soft tissues surrounding the joints
- May exist by itself or with autoimmune disorders
 - Systemic lupus erythmatosus
 - Ankylosing spondylitis
 - Rheumatoid arthritis

• Source: fma.org

Pathophysiology of Fibromyalgia

- Generalized disturbance in central and peripheral pain processing
- Amplified responses to stimuli that ordinarily are not painful to healthy persons

Myths Commonly Associated with Fibromyalgia

- “It isn’t real”
- “It’s all in your head”
- “There’s a cure for every illness---why not this?”
- “You look perfectly ‘fine’ ”

• Source: Interview, Connie Leudtke, Mayo Clinic

Causes of Fibromyalgia

- Unknown
- May develop spontaneously
- May develop after trauma or acute illness
- Possible genetic component

• Source: fma.org

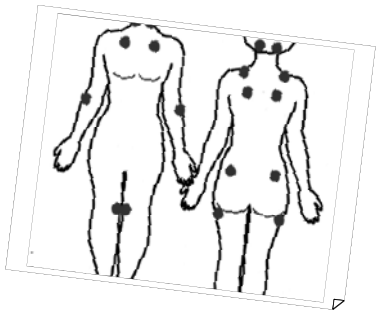
Diagnosis of Fibromyalgia

- No lab tests confirm FMS
- R/O other conditions with:
 - CBC
 - Erythrocyte sedimentation Rate (ERS)
 - Thyroid Function Tests
- The patient must meet the American College of Rheumatology (1990) diagnostic criteria:
 - Widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body for a minimum duration of three months
 - At least 11 positive "tender points" out of 18

• Source: MayoClinic.com

Diagnostic Criteria for Fibromyalgia

Tenderness or pain in at least 11 of the 18 specified tender points when pressure is applied



Source: National Fibromyalgia Association

Symptoms of Fibromyalgia

- Widespread, chronic pain with muscle and joint stiffness
- Overwhelming fatigue and sleep disturbances
- Cognitive dysfunction or "fibro fog"
- Co-existing conditions may be associated with FMS
 - Lupus
 - Osteoarthritis
 - Migraine headaches
 - Irritable bowel Syndrome (IBS)
 - Anxiety & Depression
 - Restless Leg Syndrome
 - Sleep apnea
 - Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Environmental Sensitivities

Assessment of Fibromyalgia

The Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQ):

- Pain
- Sleep status
- Fatigue
- Mood and cognition
- VAS
- ADLs

Assessment & Management by the FIBRO Method

- 'F' indicates fatigue
- 'I' indicates insomnia
- 'B' indicates blues (including depression and anxiety)
- 'R' indicates rigidity (stiffness)
- 'O' indicates 'ow!', or pain and work disability

Treatment for Fibromyalgia

- Medications
- Therapy
- Alternative treatments

Medication Therapy for Fibromyalgia

- **Analgesics**
 - Acetaminophen
 - NSAIDs in conjunction with other meds
 - Tramadol (Ultram)- supplied as extended-release
- **Antidepressants**- may ease pain & fatigue
 - Amitriptylin
 - Fluoxetine (Prozac)
 - Duloxetine (Cymbalta)-approved for use June 2008*
 - Milnacipran (Savella)- recently FDA approved for FMS treatment*
- **Anti-seizure** meds
 - Gabapentin (Neurontin)
 - Lyrica (pregabalin)- first FDA-approved drug for FMS treatment

* Not approved for children

Response to Medication Therapy

- Several randomized controlled trials have shown moderate effectiveness in controlling fibromyalgia pain (Staud, 2010)
 - 30% reduction in symptoms
 - Additional therapies will be required

Other Treatments for Fibromyalgia

- Therapy
 - Physical therapy to restore muscle balance & improve cardiovascular function
 - Hot & cold therapies may reduce pain
 - Stretching exercises may also reduce pain

Alternatives Therapies for Fibromyalgia

- Acupuncture
- Chiropractic Care
- Massage
- Herbal Supplements
- Yoga
- Rest and Pacing of Activities
- Stress Reduction & Relaxation Activities
- Aerobic land-based and water-based exercises
(Hauser, et al, 2010)

• Source: Mayoclinic.com ; fmaware.org

Fibromyalgia in Children

- Presentation
- Diagnosis
- Co-morbidities
- Treatment
- Prognosis

Prognosis for Fibromyalgia

- Fibromyalgia is chronic; symptoms wax and wane.
- Impact on ADLs and ability to work a full-time job, differs among patients.
- Overall, studies have shown that fibromyalgia can be as disabling as rheumatoid arthritis.
