

# Spectrum of functional neurological disorders

Natalija Dolnenec-Baneva, D. Nikodijevic, D. Petrovska-Cvetkovska, F. Medjiti, J. Mitrevska-Velkov', N. Atanasov<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University Clinic of Neurology, UKIM, Skopje, R. Macedonia

<sup>2</sup>University Clinic for Orthopedic Surgery, UKIM, Skopje, R. Macedonia

## ABSTRACT

Symptoms considered "functional" ("psychogenic," "medically unexplained," "hysterical") account for up to one third of new referrals to neurology outpatient departments. Complaints of weakness or difficulty walking, often in combination with sensory disturbance, represent a significant subgroup of these symptoms. Neurologists have always been the primary doctors responsible for making a diagnosis of functional neurological disorders. In contrast, they often do not take responsibility for treatment. Despite their frequency in clinical practice, descriptions of the diagnosis and management of these problems are not easily found in textbooks of neurology. Although elements of the history may be helpful, physical signs are often of crucial importance in the diagnosis of functional weakness. The "positive signs" are just as important as simply looking for the absence of signs of disease. Motor signs, particularly Hoover's sign, are more reliable than sensory signs, but none should be used in isolation and they must be interpreted in the overall context of the presentation. Neurologist must always bear in mind the possibility that the patient may have both a functional and an organic disorder. It is to be hoped that the recent increase in neurological interest in this area will lead to further diagnostic refinements in the future.

**Key words:** functional disorders, neurology