

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome challenges patients, medical professionals

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(Medical Xpress) -- We all get a little tuckered out now and then, but when that tired feeling doesn't go away with what's considered normal rest and relaxation there are a myriad of medical conditions that can be the root cause, including chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS).

This diagnosis can be a challenge, however, says Lesley Arnold, MD, director of the University of Cincinnati (UC) Women's Health Research Program (WHRP), which was established in 1999 and focuses on chronic pain and fatigue disorders that predominately affect women.

The WHRP is most widely recognized as a leader in the research and treatment of fibromyalgia: a disorder that is much more common in women than men and is characterized by chronic pain and tenderness, fatigue and sleep disturbance. CFS is also more common in women, and often occurs in conjunction with fibromyalgia.

"Chronic fatigue syndrome isn't something that can be identified by a blood test or other objective measure," says Arnold, adding that "the diagnosis is often a process of elimination, a ruling out of all the other factors that could be causing the fatigue."

According to both Arnold and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people with [chronic fatigue syndrome](#) experience a profound fatigue that is not improved by bed rest and that may be worsened by physical or mental activity. CFS patients most often function at a substantially lower level of activity than they were capable of before the onset of the illness. Additionally, CFS patients report various nonspecific symptoms, including weakness, muscle pain, impaired memory and/or mental concentration, insomnia and post-exertional fatigue lasting more than 24 hours.

"Fatigue is a very disabling problem that can

interfere substantially with a person's quality of life and function," says Arnold.

Unlike fibromyalgia, there are no FDA-approved medications for CFS.

Many patients, she says, are advised to seek some form of exercise or counseling therapies but more research is needed to improve the understanding of the causes of CFS and to find effective medical treatments.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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