

[IMAGE]

## Fibromyalgia May Be Overdiagnosed

In the past decade, fibromyalgia has become a well-known ailment that causes reduced pain tolerance, musculoskeletal pain, sleep disturbances, fatigue and morning stiffness in sufferers. The estimated prevalence of fibromyalgia has been determined to be around 2%, with 10 times more women affected than men. Recent information suggests that this syndrome may be overreported as a "fashionable diagnosis," however, while other medical conditions are overlooked.

To examine fibromyalgia diagnostic accuracy, researchers evaluated all 76 new patients referred to a rheumatology clinic over a six-month period with an initial diagnosis of fibromyalgia, or a final diagnosis of fibromyalgia after ruling out a previously incorrect diagnosis.

At final evaluation, diagnostic accuracy for fibromyalgia at a patient's initial visit was correct in only one-third of cases. Of the patients initially (but incorrectly) diagnosed with fibromyalgia, 59% suffered from other inflammatory conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis. True fibromyalgia sufferers tended to have many more tender points and were more fatigued than those suffering from other conditions. The authors of this study from *Rheumatology* concluded that there is a "disturbing inaccuracy" in the diagnosis of fibromyalgia, which might in part explain the current high rates reported for this condition. By accepting an incorrect diagnosis of fibromyalgia, many people may be inadvertently overlooking other inflammatory conditions. If you have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia and don't seem to be responding to treatment, you may want to get a second opinion.

*Reference:* Fitzcharles MA, Boulos P. Inaccuracy in the diagnosis of fibromyalgia syndrome: Analysis of referrals. *Rheumatology* 2003;42(2), pp. 263-267.

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