

FYI – Submitted by Officer Sabrina Dudley Johnson

It is important to acknowledge an often-disabling condition that afflicts many public safety workers across our nation, Fibromyalgia pronounced FIE BRO MY AL JUH and is referred to as FM. Some have asked “Why is it important to discuss and research this condition?” Dr Edward Yelin warned in his 1995 study, “Fibromyalgia is a significant health concern.” Many have scoffed, “FM is a wastebasket diagnosis!” The majority of people with FM have been ridiculed and accused of being malingers. There are members who have reached out to the disability committee in desperation, seeking knowledge about a condition they have been diagnosed with and can find self-help education on, by themselves. Several members with FM have found self-help education at various Fibromyalgia association websites and seminars but have expressed the desire to communicate with other police officers with Fibromyalgia because “civilians don’t understand the issues specific to disabled police officers.”

The purpose of this article is to help those officers who have been diagnosed with FM or who may have family members who have FM. It is important to discuss here and build awareness of FM among police officers because of its prevalence (5% of the population has FM) and a subset known as PTFM. There are CPD members, Dupage County Deputy Sheriffs, Federal LEOs and members of other jurisdictions diagnosed with FM.

Fibromyalgia is a clinically diagnosed disorder, which is poorly understood and difficult to treat. Fibromyalgia is recognized by the American College of Rheumatology, the World Health Organization, The National Institutes of Health, The Centers for Disease Control, The Social Security Administration, The Illinois Industrial Commission, and the American Medical Association as a valid medical diagnosis and cause of disability.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition for which there is no cure. Major symptoms of FM include but are not limited to pain, fatigue, cognitive dysfunction, weakness, irritable bowel/bladder, neuropathy, and allodynia. Fibromyalgia is a musculoskeletal syndrome resulting from a dysfunction of the Central Nervous System. Most people with Fibromyalgia suffer from a sleep dysfunction. They do not achieve stage 4, Delta Wave, Non-REM Sleep. There are a plethora of conditions associated with Fibromyalgia (too many to mention here). Despite the multitude of symptoms and associated conditions, people with Fibromyalgia look healthy. In fact, even those of us who are most severely disabled can “pass” for healthy.

Even though FM is not new, diagnostic criteria was not established by the ACR until 1990. Fibromyalgia is not rare, afflicting an estimated 10-12 million Americans. Fibromyalgia is six (6) times more prevalent and disabling than the total persons combined who have muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, leukemia and multiple sclerosis; and four (4) times more prevalent and disabling than Rheumatoid Arthritis. Men and children are diagnosed with FM, but women make up 75-90% of diagnosed patients. Researchers at DePaul University and the University of Illinois believe that “this feminization of the condition has helped to undermine [its] political and social value.”

NOTE:

Even though FM is classified as Arthritis, it is not a true form of Arthritis.

In fact, Dr. Mohammad Yunus of the University of Illinois in Urbana has been studying the Central Nervous System's connection to Fibromyalgia. Dr. Daniel Claw of the University of Michigan is currently conducting Brain Wave Mapping of people with Fibromyalgia, a scientific method of illustration of the pain and central nervous system dysfunction. Fibromyalgia was a key topic at the Janet G. Travell, MD Continuing Medical Education Series "Focus On Pain 2003" in Orlando, Fl and the 22 Annual Meeting and Continuing Medical Education Conference of the American Pain Society here in Chicago, Illinois. Speakers related that contrary to popular belief, there are medically objective tests that can be preformed to assist with the diagnosis of FM. Functional MRIs, Pet Scans, and Brain Wave Mapping show the Central Sensitization of FM. However, these tests are extremely expensive and insurance companies do not want to cover them.

Research has also revealed (for the purpose of determining treatment options) that there are various categories of Fibromyalgia. These are Idiopathic, Primary, Secondary, Post-Traumatic (injury related), Reactive, Juvenile, and Elderly Onset (Early Elderly Onset and Late Elderly Onset).

For further self-help and support information concerning this mysterious condition, visit the following ten websites:

www.fmaware.org

www.my.webmd.com (keyword Fibromyalgia)

www.immunesupport.com

www.fmnetnews.com

www.rheumatology.org/research/classification/fibro.htm

www.muhealth.org/~fibro/

www.fmpartnership.org/Whiplash.htm

www.sover.net/~devstar/

www.painhelp.com/fibromyalgia.htm

www.fibrocop.org