ICD for ME/CFS and FM

World Health Organization (WHO)
International Classification of Diseases
Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)

Marjorie van de Sande, B Ed, Grad Dip Ed
Director of Education

Frequently doctors and lawyers representing insurance companies aggressively allege that ME/CFS and FMS are psychological in nature. It is important to be aware of the World Health Organization’s classification of these illnesses, as this information can be used to rebut such false allegations.

Fibromyalgia

The World Health Organization incorporated fibromyalgia into their 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 1991, which was published in 1992. They assigned fibromyalgia number M 79.0 and classified it as non-articular rheumatism.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

The World Health Organization incorporated ME/CFS into their 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 1991, which was published in 1992. Post-viral fatigue syndrome is classified as a disease of the nervous system as G93.3. Benign myalgic encephalomyelitis is included in this category.

Misrepresentation of ME/CFS

Some doctors who are influenced by the psychosomatic – cognitive behaviour school of thought have adversely affected the health of many patients by alleging and publishing that CFS is included in the category of neurasthenia in the mental health chapter of International Classification of Diseases. Debate over this even reached the House of Lords in Britain on January 22, 2004.

Clarification by the World Health Organization

Dr. B. Saraceno of the WHO had clarified the classification in writing on October 16, 2001.

“I wish to clarify the situation regarding the classification of neurasthenia, fatigue syndrome, post-viral fatigue syndrome and benign myalgic encephalomyelitis.
Let me state clearly that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has not changed its position on these disorders since the publication of the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition in 1992 and version of it during later years."

"Post-viral fatigue syndrome remains under the diseases of nervous system as G93.3. Benign myalgic encephalomyelitis is included within this category."

"Neurasthenia remains under mental and behavioural disorders as F48.0 and fatigue syndrome (note: not THE CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME) is included in this category. However, post-viral fatigue syndrome is explicitly excluded from F48.0."

Further Clarification

Andre l'Hours of the WHO headquarters provided further written clarification on January 23, 2004.

“This is to confirm that according to the taxonomic principles governing the Tenth Revision of the World Health Organization’s International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10), it is not permitted for the same condition to be classified to more than one rubric as this would mean that the individual categories and subcategories were no longer mutually exclusive.”

Mr. L'Hours stated that any country that accepts the WHO Regulations for nomenclature is obligated to accept the ICD classification.