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MEDICALLY UNEXPLAINED PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS - A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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Background: Medically unexplained physical symptoms (MUPS) can be defined as physical symptoms that have no currently known physical pathological cause. MUPS account for one in five new consultations in primary care and for one third of new patients when neurology consultations are considered. Patients with MUPS present significant distress and impaired function and their diagnosis is sometimes hard to establish. The classification of somatoform disorders has been found to be insufficiently useful for therapeutic and scientific purposes. Some authors suggest that new classifications should attend to clinical utility, defined as (1) the extent to which a diagnosis can help clinicians understand or conceptualize a disorder in their daily work; (2) the extent to which a diagnosis can help the clinician communicate useful information to others, including practitioners, family members, patients, and administrators; (3) the extent to which the presence of a disorder helps the clinician choose effective interventions, and (4) the extent to which a disorder can predict future clinical management needs.

Aim: This review aims to discuss the management of MUPS in mental health services, attending to the importance of a multidisciplinary approach.

Methods: Pubmed Medline search on MUPS and review of recent literature.

Discussion: The management of MUPS implies a multidisciplinary approach that can offer different solutions for different degrees of disorder severity and takes into account the perception of the patient about his own illness. New classifications of somatoform disorders that include comprehensible explanations about these symptoms could be helpful for patients and health professionals.