
REHABILITATION OF FUNCTIONAL MOTOR DISORDERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Background and Aims

Functional motor disorders represent a “gray area” in neurology. They are not caused by structural damage to the nervous system, but rather by a disruption in the brain’s ability to receive and send signals. Symptoms include muscle weakness, paralysis, tremor, dystonia, gait disturbances, among others. The aim of this study is to define the importance of rehabilitation in the treatment of this spectrum of disorders

Methods

Articles were searched on PubMed (MEDLINE) using the MeSH terms “functional motor disorders” and “rehabilitation,” and the most relevant articles were selected.

Results

Rehabilitation in its various forms is an understudied topic that lacks robust randomized clinical trials. The literature review found retrospective studies, one prospective study, and case reports. The symptoms were heterogeneous, and rehabilitation programs were not standardized. Despite these limitations, the studies showed that rehabilitation is an important treatment approach, with improvement seen in up to 70% of patients. One randomized trial showed promising results in hospitalized patients with gait disturbances in a 3-week program. The most commonly used approach combined motor relearning with a behavioral component.

Conclusion

Functional motor disorders are complex, have multifactorial etiology, and are challenging to diagnose. Rehabilitation aims at functional and movement recovery, and although not yet supported by strong scientific evidence, it has shown beneficial effects for patients when integrated into a multimodal treatment plan.

Keywords: Functional Motor Disorder; Rehabilitation