COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION IN WOMEN WITH CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

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Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME) has recently been recognized by the CDC as a physiological disease that leaves patients substantially debilitated. Increasing evidence, including data from twin studies (1), points to the fact that patients with the illness also suffer from a significant degree of cognitive dysfunction - impairing their ability to process information, and recall verbal and visual information (2). We present data from a large cohort of CFS/ME patients in a study of a VDR nuclear receptor agonist (3), which suggest that women with CFS/ME tend to suffer from a greater decline in cognitive function then their male counterparts, and that cognitive function is at least partly restored by the agonist. The cognitive function of five women is examined in greater detail. For example, after falling ill with CFS/ME, one 45-year-old female went from being a corporate executive to reading at a 4th grade level. She became too confused to drive, lost her short-term memory, and forgot words, grammar, and basic math. Another patient was a corporate attorney who, after falling ill with CFS/ME, found that her reading skills fell to an 8th grade level. She lost the ability to problem solve and could not get beyond the first set of questions on an IQ test. In view of the recent report that the VDR nuclear receptor is over-expressed in the endometrium (4), it is possible that the severity of cognitive dysfunction among women may not be due to serendipity and that there is need for future research of gene expression in the endometrium.

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