

Dickson A *et al*, "Neuropsychological Functioning, Illness Perception, Mood and Quality of Life in Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Autoimmune Thyroid Disease and Healthy Participants," *Psychol Med* Jan 15 (2009): 1-10. [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 19144216

BACKGROUND: This study attempted to longitudinally investigate neuropsychological function, illness representations, self-esteem, mood and quality of life (QoL) in individuals with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and compared them with both healthy participants and a clinical comparison group of individuals with autoimmune thyroid disease (AITD).

METHOD: Neuropsychological evaluation was administered at two time points, five weeks apart. Twenty-one individuals with CFS, 20 individuals with AITD and 21 healthy participants were matched for age, pre-morbid intelligence, education level and socio-economic status (SES). All groups also completed measures of illness perceptions, mood, self-esteem and QoL at both time points.

RESULTS: The CFS group showed significantly greater impairment on measures of immediate and delayed memory, attention and visuo-constructional ability, and reported significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression. After controlling for the effects of mood, the CFS group still demonstrated significant impairment in attention. The CFS group also reported significantly lower self-reported QoL than the AITD and healthy participants. In terms of illness perceptions, the AITD group believed that their condition would last longer, that they had more treatment control over their condition, and reported less concern than the CFS group.

CONCLUSIONS: These results suggest that the primary cognitive impairment in CFS is attention and that this is not secondary to affective status. The lower treatment control perceptions and greater illness concerns that CFS patients report may be causally related to their affective status.