

PE2165/D: Raise awareness of and provide educational resources and training for Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)

Marion Brown written submission, 16 January 2026

We have recently become aware of this petition PE2165. It is startling to read the SPICe Briefing and then the further written submissions around this 2025 petition topic of encouraging and educating GPs and other HCPs to 'recognise' FND. It is understood from this petition evidence that very considerable Scottish Government resource has already been directed towards this aim in the period 2020-2025 – with FND being included in the category of 'neurological conditions' within the *Neurological care and support: framework for action 2020-2025*.

We raised a very relevant [Petition PE01651](#) in 2017. "Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to appropriately recognise and effectively support individuals affected and harmed by prescribed drug dependence and withdrawal."

This petition collected an unprecedented number of submissions. These are immensely relevant. Please revisit this.

In response to Petition PE2165 I would like to raise the following questions / issues for the Petitions Committee which relate directly to our own (2017) Petition PE01651:

1. To date (January 2026) there still is **no support or recognition whatsoever** for people in Scotland who are suffering adverse effects of dependence on, or withdrawal from, prescribed drugs including antidepressants. Meanwhile prescriptions of antidepressants (and other 'mental health' drugs) continue to soar unchecked.
2. We hear often about people suffering horrible experiences, their prescribers seemingly oblivious to and/or utterly cavalier about the risks and harms of (especially when starting/ stopping/ tapering/ adding/ switching) these extremely commonly GP prescribed drugs.
3. We are also hearing frequently of people who are being given the FND diagnosis when they are experiencing adverse and/or prescribed drug adverse or withdrawal effects.
4. The evidence submitted for our Petition PE01651 showed clearly that many people who are experiencing adverse neurological effects from taking – or withdrawing from – very commonly prescribed antidepressants are being misdiagnosed with 'Medically Unexplained Symptoms' &/or 'Functional Neurological Disorder' - 'of unknown aetiology'.
5. Our petition PE01651 was closed in early 2021. The Covid pandemic had already by then had a major impact on **increasing** the prescribing of antidepressants etc.

6. The formal paper which was published to summarise our petition evidence ([Guy A, Brown M, Lewis S, Horowitz M. “The ‘patient voice’: patients who experience antidepressant withdrawal symptoms are often dismissed, or misdiagnosed with relapse, or a new medical condition”. *Therapeutic Advances in Psychopharmacology*. 2020;10.](#)) is being increasingly frequently cited in medical journal articles – and is cited throughout “The Maudsley Deprescribing Guidelines” – a hugely significant 2024 publication:

“Withdrawal symptoms can also be mis-diagnosed as a new-onset medical condition, or placed in the category of ‘medically unexplained symptoms’ or functional neurological disorder, or even attributed to malingering (Table 1.3).¹⁷ This interpretation likely arises because of the wide array of symptoms that psychiatric drug withdrawal can produce and a lack of familiarity with withdrawal symptoms.¹⁷ There are numerous overlapping symptoms of psychiatric drug withdrawal with these conditions: tremor, weakness (functional neurological disorder); fatigue, tiredness (chronic fatigue syndrome) and numerous symptoms that could be grouped under the category of ‘medically unexplained symptoms’ when the symptoms are not attributed to psychiatric drug withdrawal.¹⁷ These misdiagnoses can lead to a failure to recommend appropriate treatment, extensive medical investigation and a feeling on behalf of patients that they were not listened to.” Maudsley Deprescribing Guidelines, p.21.

(NB. Ref 17 is Guy, Brown, Lewis, Horowitz 2020)

7. The fact that more and more people in Scotland are being diagnosed with FND is clear proof that something is going very seriously wrong. GPs and other HCPs are being actively **taught to miss** – and mis-diagnose as FND - the most important signals which should alert them to considering possible adverse effects of these commonly prescribed ‘safe and effective’ [sic] drugs which they are continuing to **start new people on every single day** – as well as recommending risky too-fast tapering, switching, adding more drugs, and other interventions which can and do exacerbate the wide-ranging adverse drug effects being suffered by patients.

Please would the Petition Committee take appropriate action now to convey to the Scottish Government that many people are becoming harmed – and **urge that the adverse effects of commonly prescribed antidepressants etc. no longer be missed and mis-diagnosed as FND.**