CASE STUDY

What do physicians think of somatoform disorders?

CATEGORISING

Type:

BACKGROUND

Somatoform disorders are characterised by physical symptoms that are not fully explained by a general medical condition. Somatoform disorders are common, but many healthcare workers are confused by the diagnostic terminology and are reluctant to use these diagnostic labels.

METHODS

Child psychiatrists, forensic psychiatrists, gastroenterologists, and other physicians from different practice settings were identified through professional societies, like the Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine, American Psychiatric Association, and the American College of Physicians. They were invited to respond to an anonymous Internet survey. By eliciting the views of physicians who see patients with somatoform disorders, we explored their confusion about diagnostic terminology and their reluctance to use these diagnostic labels.

QUESTIONS OF THE CATEGORISER

Does the research project come under the scope of application of the Human Research Act?

No

BECAUSE

This project was based on a study protocol, in which the exact procedures used to generate generalizable data (method-driven search for generalizable knowledge) were defined. Researchers used a web-based survey to anonymously collect (“anonymously collected data”) data from physicians. The survey contained questions that elicited physicians’ views on disorders that may include physical symptoms not fully explained by a general medical condition. The aim of the study was to explore confusion about diagnostic terminology, and physicians’ reluctance to use these diagnostic labels.