



**FUNCTIONAL  
NEUROLOGICAL  
DISORDER  
SOCIETY**

555 E. Wells Street, Ste. 1100

Milwaukee, WI 53202-3823

(414) 918-9814 Fax: (414) 276-2146

@FNDsociety.org www.FNDsociety.org

January 19, 2021

### Press release from the Functional Neurological Disorders Society

We have become aware of a very small number of high-profile social media videos suggesting major neurological complications following vaccination against COVID 19. Whilst we do not wish to comment specifically on any case, we would state, as general comment, that many of the clinical features reported and observed on video in some cases are those of functional neurological disorder (FND). FND can be diagnosed with good accuracy from videos on social media<sup>1,2</sup>, where they are often confused with other neurological conditions.

In this context, functional neurological disorder is best understood as a disruption in the brain's normal mechanisms for controlling the body. We know that FND is often triggered by a combination of abnormal physical and psychological experiences. We would expect FND to develop in some individuals after vaccination due to a combination of heightened stress owing to the pandemic, feelings of uncertainty about the vaccine and the normal transient physical symptoms, and discomfort after vaccination. If FND is not quickly detected and diagnosed with appropriate explanation and management, it can become a more prolonged condition. It is important that these conditions are recognized for what they are – in part so that the patient can be appropriately reassured and can, if necessary, access appropriate treatment, and to prevent a misleading impression of neurological complications of the vaccines.

Serious neurological complications after vaccinations are well recognized although thankfully extremely rare. It is vital that, in the interests of public health, news outlets are aware of FND as a possible explanation for neurological symptoms after a vaccine, before rushing to report neurological side effects to a news hungry public who are understandably eager for information on vaccine safety.

More information on functional neurological disorders can be found in references 3 and 4

The Functional Neurological Disorder Society ([www.fndsociety.org](http://www.fndsociety.org)) is an international society of healthcare professionals and scientists who are dedicated to improving the diagnosis and treatment of patients with functional neurological disorder (FND). The society operates exclusively for scientific, scholarly and educational purposes. It aims to encourage and advance clinical and scientific research pertaining to functional neurological disorders, to provide forums, including International Congresses, online educational portals, medical journals and scientific symposia open to a multidisciplinary audience, and to increase awareness among healthcare professionals and the public about functional neurological disorders.

1. Popkirov, S., Nicholson, T. R., Bloem, B. R., Cock, H. R., Derry, C. P., Duncan, R., ... & Stone, J. (2019). Hiding in plain sight: functional neurological disorders in the news. *The Journal of neuropsychiatry and clinical neurosciences*, 31(4), 361-367.
2. Stamelou, M., Edwards, M. J., Espay, A. J., Fung, V. S., Hallett, M., Lang, A. E., Tijssen, M. A., & Bhatia, K. P. (2011). Movement disorders on YouTube--caveat spectator. *The New England journal of medicine*, 365(12), 1160–1161. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMc1107673>
3. Espay, A. J., Aybek, S., Carson, A., Edwards, M. J., Goldstein, L. H., Hallett, M., ... & Morgante, F. (2018). Current concepts in diagnosis and treatment of functional neurological disorders. *JAMA neurology*, 75(9), 1132-1141.
4. [www.neurosymbols.org](http://www.neurosymbols.org)

#### President

Mark Hallett

#### Secretary

Jon Stone

#### Treasurer

Alan J. Carson

#### Directors

Selma Aybek Rusca

Marina AJ De Koning-Tijssen

Mark J. Edwards

Alberto J. Espay

Laura H. Goldstein

Joseph Jankovic

Kathrin LaFaver

W. Curt LaFrance, Jr.

Anthony Lang

Markus Reuber

Karen S. Rommelfanger

Jeffrey P. Staab

Valerie Voon