

## Scientific Study

# Doctors Asking for More Education

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Over 60% of general practitioners surveyed in Denmark have been consulted by at least one patient with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) in the past year.

More than half of these physicians recognize that these patients are in a chronic condition which requires medical intervention. Yet, they feel that they are rarely able to meet healthcare expectations for this population and the majority refer the patient to other specialists.

Unable to efficiently break down foreign matter, such as chemicals and drugs, people with MCS suffer from symptoms of toxicity upon exposure to chemical materials such as perfume, scented products, cleaning agents, air “fresheners”, solvents, pesticides, and petroleum products.

MCS is a frustrating and often misunderstood illness that steals away life. One’s place in the world as they knew it is replaced by isolation and symptoms ranging from headaches to balance problems and seizures. The neurological effects of

chemical exposure are most profoundly disabling in a world where chemicals are pervasive in every environment.

“Chemo fog” is a term most are familiar with. It describes the slow and muddy brain func-

tion which is the result of toxic chemotherapy drugs. MCS has a similar term, “brain fog”, which occurs as a result of chemical exposure.

People with MCS are unable to break down and clear foreign matter like healthy counterparts. Even a tiny amount of a chemical, such as breathing the chemicals in a scented hand lotion worn by another person in the same room, will cause a toxic reaction. This has been linked both to genetic variation and to physical damage done by single large doses of specific chemicals or chronic low-dose exposure.

The majority of general practitioners cite the cause of MCS as multi-factorial and biological, recommending partial or complete avoidance of chemical exposures.

Because general practitioners are not well schooled on management of this group of patients, they feel they have little to offer. Nearly 85% have requested more knowledge, such as clinical guidelines, diagnostic tools, and more research into the pathophysiology of MCS.

### Reference

Skovbjerg S, Duus Johansen J, Rasmussen A, Thorsen H, Elberling J. General practitioners' experiences with provision of healthcare to patients with self-reported multiple chemical sensitivity. *Scand J Prim Health Care*. 2009 May 18:1-5.

