

News

Gene Responsible for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Identified

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In recent news, Alan Light, a research professor in the anesthesiology department, dispels the myth that chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is mere laziness.

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is characterized by disabling fatigue, unrefreshing sleep, headaches, depression, cognitive dysfunction, and body pain.

More than 4 million Americans suffer from CFS. While more frequent in women aged 40-59 years, people of all ages, ethnicities, economic statuses, and both sexes may develop CFS.

Light explains that there is a gene that produces a protein which tells the muscles when they are too tired to keep working. When this gene signals, people feel fatigued and are encouraged to rest.

However, in persons with chronic fatigue syndrome, this gene signals the muscles too early. This leads to fatigue and exhaustion at much lower levels of activity than most of us experience.

Exercise acts to increase proteins which signal muscles fatigue. In nor-

mal people, these proteins are limited; however, in people with CFS these proteins increase rapidly and induce a feeling of exhaustion.

Though graded exercise therapy is often recommended for people with CFS, this finding shows that exercise is extremely counter-productive for people with CFS.

Light’s research does not identify what causes this gene to suddenly malfunction in previously healthy people, though he hopes that CFS will now be viewed as an actual disease.

Even more importantly, a simple genetic test could identify chronic fatigue syndrome for diagnostic purposes.

Other research has linked vaccinations, toxic environmental exposures, and various infections as triggers of CFS. Toxic exposures may act to alter genetic constitution. Vaccines may act to sensitize the immune system.

There is now sufficient evidence that chronic fatigue syndrome is real and disabling.

Light’s research may lead to potential treatments for CFS.

