

# TRANSCENDENT Speaker Series

## Head Injuries, Concussion and Functional Neurological Disorder: A New Framework for a Complex Continuum

### What is Functional Neurological Disorder?

**Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)** falls in the grey zone between neurology and psychiatry. FND are neurological symptoms that are incongruent with recognized neurological disease.

➡ The processes that drive these symptoms and behaviours are involuntary to the patients.



It is critical to treat patients with FND with respect and dignity. Unlike with malingering and factitious disorders, these patients are very much experiencing symptoms just like any other medical disorder.

### What are the causes and triggers?

FND is caused by a disruption in the complex networks within the brain. The reason for these disruptions is complicated. The strongest risk factors are:

- **Childhood adversity** (for example, abuse, stress, or bullying), which can reshape the threat response system, leading to altered brain wiring/reactions to stress
- **Genetic** factors, which can lead to a more vulnerable brain



The triggers for FND are often things that shift the brain's attention and introduce new symptoms. A common cause of FND is injury, for example, a concussion.

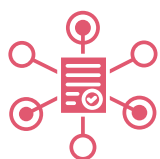
#### DID YOU KNOW?

FND can also be related to negative beliefs about health outcomes due to negative health-related information and/or experiences. This is known as the Nocebo effect.

➡ Negative expectations around concussion recovery, could lead to a Nocebo effect.

### What about concussions?

The symptoms of concussions can be non-specific and can have overlap with FND. This is especially challenging in those with persisting symptoms. Unexpected symptoms after a concussion may suggest FND



To help understand the continuum between concussion and FND, there is a new framework.

#### Key Implications

- More psychologically based approaches, like cognitive behaviour therapy, may benefit some patients who are experiencing concussion and FND
- How recovery and treatments are framed can have a large impact on the way they are received by patients
- Validating symptoms and experiences is key

This information is based on a talk done for the TRANSCENDENT team by Dr. Matthew Burke.