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NEURASTHENIA, SUBJECTIVE HEALTH COMPLAINTS  
AND SENSITIZATION

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## Neurasthenia, subjective health complaints and sensitization

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### Abstract

Patients (n=997) visiting general practitioners in an area in Western Norway completed a battery of questionnaires related to subjective health complaints and fatigue. An additional 78 patients were referred directly to the hospital for neurasthenia. After screening the questionnaires and interviews with a selected sample, a total of 73 patients were finally accepted as 'neurasthenia' patients satisfying the ICD-10 diagnosis. These patients were compared with the remaining 1002 patients. Patients with neurasthenia had more prevalent and more severe subjective health complaints, particularly pseudoneurological and musculoskeletal complaints than the reference population of patients. They reported low levels of instrumental coping and poorer physical fitness, in spite of a comparable level of self reported physical activity and exercise. Women were over-represented in this group. This overall higher score on subjective complaints from all organ systems is in accordance with the hypothesis of an overall and general sensitization to the afferent inputs from their psychophysiological systems.

### Keywords

Neurasthenia; Subjective health complaints; Pseudoneurology; Musculoskeletal complaints; Fatigue