

Physiological disorders

Overview of treatment options

Treatment options

A variety of treatment options are available for service users with physiological disorders, including:

- Medication
- Surgery
- Rehabilitation programmes
- Complementary therapies
- Specialised treatment such as radiotherapy
- Lifestyle choices such as smoking cessation.

Medication

Medication can be given for physiological disorders in order to:

- Influence specific organ or body system functioning, e.g. dopamine drugs to stimulate nerve cells for service users with Parkinson's disease or thyroxine tablets as hormone replacement for service users with hypothyroidism
- Relieve specific symptoms, such as pain or inflammation, e.g. anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce stiffness, pain and swelling for service users with rheumatoid arthritis or statins to lower cholesterol levels for service users with coronary heart disease
- Prevent or minimise complications, e.g. antibiotics to prevent infection for service users with leukaemia.

Surgery

Surgery can be used in the treatment of physiological disorders in order to:

- Remove affected organs or body tissue, e.g.
a colectomy to remove a section of colon for service users with colon cancer.
- Change the function of organs or body systems, e.g.
a coronary artery bypass graft for a service user with coronary heart disease.
- Relieve or reduce symptoms of a disorder, e.g.
a coronary angioplasty to dilate the coronary arteries of a service user with coronary heart disease.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation programmes can provide a very important contribution to the treatment of physiological disorders. They can support recovery, minimise complications and reduce the incidence of recurrence. For example:

Physiotherapy: to improve movement, posture and mobility, e.g. for service users with rheumatoid arthritis

Occupational therapy: to support the recovery of function and independence, e.g. following a stroke

Nutritional therapy: to provide advice about diet and nutrition, e.g. for service users recovering from coronary heart disease

Mental health rehabilitation: to provide emotional support, e.g. for service users living with cancer

Social work support: to provide support with major life changes, e.g. for service users who are no longer able to work.

Complementary therapies

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) can provide very effective treatment options for some service users with physiological disorders. For example:

Homeopathy: remedies that use highly diluted substances which practitioners claim can cause the body to heal itself.

Used for: asthma, arthritis, depression.

Acupuncture: derived from ancient Chinese medicine. Fine needles are inserted at certain sites in the body for therapeutic or preventative purposes.

Used for: pain relief, asthma.

Osteopathy: detecting, treating and preventing health problems by moving, stretching and massaging muscles and joints.

The Alexander Technique has been shown to improve posture and balance for service users with Parkinson's disease.

Herbalism: remedies that use active ingredients made from plants, including aromatherapy.

Used for: relieving pain and the side effects from chemotherapy.