



## Synopsis

# Multiple Symptoms Study 3 – An extended-role general practitioner clinic for patients with persistent physical symptoms: a Randomised Controlled Trial

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## Plain language summary

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## Plain language summary

### Why did we do this study?

One in fifty UK adults regularly has multiple symptoms which make life difficult for them. These persistent physical symptoms include pain, fatigue, dizziness, stomach problems and many others. Because medical tests don't show a cause for persistent physical symptoms, doctors often don't know how to help and patients can feel no-one believes them. We developed a way of using new scientific knowledge about symptoms to help people make sense of their own symptoms and to try new things to help. We tested this in a Symptoms Clinic. We wanted to know if patients found a difference 1 year later.

### What did we do?

Three hundred and fifty-four people with multiple symptoms joined the study between December 2018 and December 2021. Half of them had up to four appointments with a specially trained GP at the Symptoms Clinic, while the others got their usual care. We asked people in both groups about their symptoms after 3, 6 and 12 months and compared the two groups. We also listened to what happened in the clinic and interviewed some people to find out what it was like.

### What did we find?

People who attended the Symptoms Clinic found it gave them better ways to understand and manage their symptoms. A year after they joined the study, people who had attended the Symptoms Clinic had less symptoms bothering them than those who hadn't. They also had a better quality of life. This was even though their last Symptoms Clinic appointment was 9 months ago.

### What does this mean for people with persistent physical symptoms?

Explaining physical symptoms in this way can make a real difference for patients. This research shows us how health professionals can do it well and the difference it can make.