

1. Introduction

What is a neurological condition?

'A long-term neurological condition results from the disease of, injury or damage to, the body's nervous system (i.e. the brain, spinal cord and or their peripheral nerve conditions which will affect the individual and their family in one way or another for the rest of their life'.¹

Neurological disorders are very common, accounting for about one in ten general practitioner consultations². They affect the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves and muscles. They include many different conditions of varying severity, some very common and others exceedingly rare, from migraine, to motor neurone disease.

Despite considerable advances in investigations, diagnosis still relies almost entirely on history and examination, both of which require training, practice and experience to interpret and perfect.

Neurological conditions include:

- Intermittent disorders, such as epilepsy, migraine and other headache problems;
- Progressive long-term condition, such as Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis (MS) and dementia;
- Life-threatening acute (or suddenly occurring) conditions, such as stroke, meningitis, encephalitis, status epilepticus, acute inflammatory neuropathies, traumatic brain injury and subarachnoid haemorrhage;
- Hereditary neurological diseases such as Huntington's.

They are very common in the UK:

- Neurology symptoms account for 20% of acute hospital admissions and are the third most common reason for seeing a GP
- 0.6-1% of the population is diagnosed with a neurological condition every year and 1 in 6 people have a neurological condition that makes a significant impact on their lives
- 2% of the UK population are disabled by a neurological condition and 850,000 people are caring for someone with a neurological condition³
- The lifetime prevalence of both MS and Parkinson's is 2 per 1,000 population and double that for active epilepsy
- The lifetime prevalence of headache is 90%, and for young women it is the most common symptom reported in the community⁴

1 in 7 people in any area are affected by a long-term neurological condition (LTNC).

In Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth there are approximately 285,000 people affected by a long-term neurological condition. This includes:

Hampshire	(approx. 200,000)
Isle of Wight	(approx. 20,000)
Portsmouth	(approx. 30,000)
Southampton	(approx. 35,000)

1 in 6 people are carers and approximately 80% of those are affected by a LTNC.

¹ Department of Health (2005) National Service Framework (NSF) for Long-Term Conditions

² Department of Health (2005) National Service Framework (NSF) for Long-Term Conditions

³ Department of Health (2005) National Service Framework (NSF) for Long-Term Conditions

⁴ 'Local adult neurology services for the next decade: report of a working party', Royal College of Physicians, and Association of British Neurologists, June 2011

Quotes from service users and carers:

'Anyone with a disability, long-term health condition or illness is a person first.'

Planning and support for any person should be holistic and person-centred and mean a person's needs are met as an individual and as someone with a disability, long-term health condition or illness'.

'A carer is a person first. Planning and support for any carer should be holistic, person-centred and mean a carer's needs are met as an individual and as a carer'.