

## **Medically Unexplained Physical Symptoms**

The term “medically unexplained physical symptoms (MUPS)” is used to include physical symptoms that cannot be explained by any medical disease.

According to the statistics from the Family Medicine Unit, Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, HKU, around 23% of the consultations in primary care are for MUPS. MUPS can arise from any body system. The commonest symptoms are muscle pain, dyspepsia, chest pain, palpitation, dizziness, headache, tiredness, insomnia, and difficulty in breathing.

Research over the recent 10 years found that there was a strong association between MUPS and stress. MUPS can be seen as a kind of hypersensitivity of the body and mind. Clinical data showed that about half of the MUPS patients had an underlying psychological illness such as depression or anxiety disorders. The rest of the MUPS were mainly the result of functional disturbance in the body.

There is no magic cure for MUPS, effective treatment for MUPS depends on the co-operation between the patient and doctor, and the patient’s trust in doctor. A smart patient should try to describe all the details of one’s symptom, and a family doctor who knows about the patient’s background can help to find out the true cause of stress, and to down-regulate the sensitivity of the body by a clear explanation and simple advice on life style modification.