

Fibromyalgia drug sparks debate

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Pfizer heralded the effectiveness of its newly approved fibromyalgia treatment, Lyrica, as some U.S. doctors question the very existence of the condition.

Lyrica acts as a central nervous system depressant that alleviates some painful conditions associated with fibromyalgia but some doctors, including Dr. Frederick Wolfe who first described the diagnostic guidelines for the condition, say it isn't a disease, The New York Times said Monday.

Fibromyalgia primarily affects middle-age woman and is associated with chronic and pervasive pain of unknown origin. Most sufferers don't respond to painkillers such as aspirin or narcotic analgesics such as codeine.

Many doctors fear the emergence of Lyrica as a treatment will validate the contentious diagnosis and may actually worsen the symptoms by persuading sufferers from obsessing over aches and pains other people may tolerate, the Times said.

Wolfe, director of the National Databank for Rheumatic Diseases, told the Times he considered the condition a psychosomatic response to emotional trauma.

The American College of Rheumatology, the Food and Drug Administration and health insurers recognize fibromyalgia as a diagnosable disease.

Critics and opponents, however, agree that Lyrica treats patients who don't respond to conventional pain killers.

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