

Findings

Symptom interpretation
prior to treatment start

**Bodily
sensation**

Interpretation

Symptom

Action

**Health
seeking**

Bodily sensations

"I wanted to buy some new jeans... then I noticed that the usual size didn't fit me."
(informant no. 10)

"Recently I have developed this tendency of putting off things and I have been wondering: What is happening to me?"
(informant no. 7)

"I developed a top belly... well I am getting older and so are my friends; none of us are fit any more!"
(informant no. 4)

From bodily sensation to symptom

"I thought I had the flu or something, so I went to the doctor. Well, he put me on his couch... and then he went for a colleague."
(informant no. 8)

"The thing with my stomach began at least 3 months ago. I discussed it with my daughter in law: "Do you think it is a hernia?" We agreed that it might be something like that."
(informant no. 3)

"I just noticed some kind of change – a vague discomfort or maybe some extra gas. I thought it might be my menopause."
(informant no. 10)

Health seeking and treatment start

"I have a tumor right here; you can feel it yourself. I immediately went to the doctor...I was convinced that it was serious."
(informant no. 6)

"I went to him [the doctor] and said: I strongly feel there is something in my stomach which shouldn't be there. And fortunately he trusted me and sent me to the hospital... in a situation like this, it might be an advantage to be educated well – and in a certain position, too."
(informant no. 7)

"I went to the doctor because I had developed a prolaps, which I discovered one morning after my shower and she examined me carefully. Then she told me that it might be something serious."
(informant no. 4)

As long as the bodily sensations could be understood within a daily life context, they were not interpreted as symptoms of a disease.

Initially symptoms were interpreted as signs of a harmless condition.

The General Practitioner acted as first contact and gate-keeper to specialist care.