

Pain/Introduction

Although it is now widely accepted that sex and gender aspects influence the perception, expression, and processing of pain, and many studies have explored this relationship, there has been little analysis of sex and gender aspects in biomedical and clinical research and little application in medical practice. In particular, knowledge about the impact of gender aspects on neural responses to pain is still very limited.

As early as 1998, the Federal Health Survey of the Federal Republic of Germany confirmed that women across all age groups (18 to 80 years) have a higher prevalence of pain (of varying localization). This results in significantly higher prevalence rates for women compared to men for pain disorders such as migraine/headache, craniomandibular dysfunction, irritable bowel syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Women in their reproductive years are particularly affected.

Explanatory models and research perspectives regarding this sex difference differ, sometimes considerably. Mechanisms underlying the observed gender-related variability of pain responses are still often understood as either biological or psychosocial determinants. For a detailed understanding of nociceptive responses, the influence of biological aspects (e.g. on hormonal and neurobiological levels) and their interaction with gender (gender-specific assumptions) should be investigated.

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