

MAIN THEME: DEPRESSION AND PAIN: WHAT IS THE LINK?

NEUROIMAGING IN SOMATOFORM PAIN DISORDER

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Patients with chronic and disabling pain which cannot be fully explained by underlying organic pathology are common in all levels of health care and are often found difficult to treat by physicians as well as mental health specialists. Moreover the neurobiology of somatoform pain disorder is still not entirely understood. However, insights from psychobiology shed new light on the genesis of pain disorders like genetic or epigenetic factors, traumatic experiences like childhood abuse or lack in the development of social feelings like empathy. Recent neu-

roimaging results suggest that especially the neural mechanisms of the affective dimension of pain are disturbed in patients with somatoform pain disorder, and underlying mechanisms may include processing of similar experiences (e.g., depression) in overlapping spatio-temporal patterns of neural activation. In this talk we will present recent biological data at least in part from our own neuroimaging research that could help to deepen our still preliminary understanding of the nature of this mental disorder.