

Chronic Pain Associated with Activation of Brain's Glial Cells

Patients with chronic pain show signs of glial activation in brain centers that modulate pain, according to results from a PET-MRI study.

"Glia appears to be involved in the pathophysiology of chronic pain, and therefore we should consider developing therapeutic approaches targeting glia," Dr. Marco L. Loggia from Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Charlestown, Massachusetts, told Reuters Health by email.

"Glial activation is accompanied by many cellular responses, which include the production and release of substances (such as so-called 'pro-inflammatory cytokines') that can sensitize the pain pathways in the central nervous system," he explained. "Thus, glial activation is not a mere reaction to a pain state but actively contributes to the establishment and/or maintenance of persistent pain."

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