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Study suggests link between stress hormone and PTSD in women

By Mary Forgione, Tribune Health

8:34 PM PST, February 25, 2011

Post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a lingering psychological response to a major traumatic event. And researchers studying the condition now have a clue about its development. Hint: Women and men are different.

Their study, conducted in part at Emory University in Atlanta, was published Wednesday in the journal Nature. Researchers tested 64 people who had experienced significant trauma in noncombat settings. In women but not men, they found a link between PTSD and high levels of a hormone called pituitary adenylate cyclase-activating polypeptide produced in response to stress.

This [Emory](#) report about the study explains:

"What this says is that men and women who have been traumatized may arrive at PTSD by different biological pathways," said co-author Kerry Ressler, associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Emory School of Medicine. "In this case, we have a clue how that works, in that the genetic data point to changes in the ability to respond to estrogen." And here is the [abstract](#) of the original report.

Women generally are twice as likely as men to have anxiety disorders. The [Anxiety Disorders Assn. of America](#) says brain chemistry may be part of the reason.

So perhaps it stands to reason that such chemistry affects the way in which women develop PTSD. This research may be a clue, but many more clues are needed to better treat, or even prevent, the condition.

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