Sensory thresholds, pain thresholds and reflexes: a bridge from basic science to clinic

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ABSTRACT
For many idiopathic facial pains (atypical odontalgia, glossodynia, but also myofacial pain), the etiology is unclear. Arguments in favour and against a common etiology have been discussed. The female predominance in all these syndromes is apparent. In order to increase our understanding of these orofacial pains, our research has focused on three main themes:
1. try to document in a more objective way the differences between patients and non-patients, and the fluctuations of pain over time
2. study the differences regarding the sensory system between males and females, and investigate the role of hormonal fluctuations
3. study the differences regarding motor reactions between males and females and in different patient-groups.

The present lecture will focus on the results of these studies, which illustrate that female patients have lower pain thresholds in the genders regarding sensory and pain thresholds, and also that there is an apparent relation between the after electrical stimulation. In addition, there is a clustering of subjects into a "higher" and "lower" sensitive group.

Some implications regarding to the clinical measurement of pain and possible applications in the future of these findings will be discussed.