Ethnic Disparities in Pain Perception: Role of µ-opioid Receptors

Ethnic differences in pain perception are well documented... but their underlying mechanisms are not.

µ-opioid receptors (MORs) are an important system regulating pain processing.

Does physiology of MORs contribute to the ethnic disparity in pain sensitivity?

- Pain test (10% capsaicin)
- Control (painless cream)

Self-reported rating of pain every 5 minutes

µ-selective agonist binding potential (BPND) using PET scan

NHB patients reported higher pain levels than NHW

Ethnic variation in the density of unoccupied µ-opioid receptors may be associated with disparities in pain perception.

Letzen et al. (2019) | Pain
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