

Brain memory modifies during female cycle

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Scientists at Northwestern and Columbia universities say "wiring" in female rat brain memory areas expands and retracts during the menstrual cycle.

The changes, the researchers said, occur in relation to the amount of estrogen present during the estrous/menstrual cycle.

Because that area of the brain, the hippocampus, has been shown to be critical to both humans and animals for memory processes, the group said the finding lends support to empirical and anecdotal evidence concerning variations in cognition and memory processes as a function of the time of the female cycle.

"Beyond the findings relative to estrogen and its regulation of female cognition, the results of the study suggest that the brain's capacity for growth is well beyond anything we considered in the past," said Aryeh Routtenberg, director of The Cresap Neuroscience Laboratory and a researcher at the Northwestern University Institute for Neuroscience.

A study describing the research was presented Monday by Routtenberg, a professor of psychology, neurobiology and physiology, during the 2005 Society for Neuroscience Meeting in Washington.

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