

# Does Your Doctor Know You Have a Female Brain?



## Brain Gender Differences

**Does your doctor know that you have a female brain?** Now, that's a silly question. Of course he/she does. Not according to Bruce S. McEwen of Rockefeller University who has spent over 40 years researching how the brain and the nervous system are affected by hormones.

According to Dr. McEwen, **"Medicine is clueless** as to how males and females really differ from one another. They **have a very mechanistic view of disease** and they tend to **think it always works the same way in both sexes.** That can be **dangerous.**"

McEwen views himself as a heretic to parts of the medical establishment that **still consider sex hormones in the brain to be limited to reproduction.** Actually sex hormones circulate throughout the entire nervous system affecting not only reproduction but also gender differences.

McEwen's research suggests males and females respond differently to sex hormones in terms of – **"... feeding, thirst, pain, sensory processes, mood, cognitive function,**

***effects of stress, and the propensity for drug abuse."***

Physiology of Behavior, December, 2008.

Results from his rat brain research, indicate that **sex hormones** do not act directly on genes but are part of the dendrites and synapses where all of the important neural communication takes place throughout the brain.

Elizabeth Waters, a postdoctoral associate in McEwen's lab, makes the case for a **gender approach to treatment** based on different sex hormones and their different effect on the brain. Waters feels it is critical to understand that the **female brain is different** and treatment and better drugs are needed to **assure women are receiving just as effective medical care as men.**

**You may have to educate your doctor on the fact that your female brain is not the same as a man's. If he/she questions you, remind them that a man has a sexual thought every minute, and you have a sexual thoughts too. But, you have a number of other thoughts to process first and you get back to the sex ones when you have the time.**

By Joyce Hansen