Neurosteroid replacement therapy aims to control seizures in women

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Image: Texas A&M Health Science Center

A Texas A&M researcher suspects that women are more prone to seizures around the time of menstruation because a drop in a key neurosteroid, resulting in a condition known as catamenial epilepsy.

Dr. Samba Reddy, a professor of neuroscience and experimental therapeutics in the Texas A&M Health Science Center's College of Medicine, says, "Because there is a hormonal component to this disorder, many neurologists don't even know it exists. We are fundamentally ignoring the changes in brain receptors that women are going through."

Reddy is developing a method to treat women with catamenial epilepsy that takes into consideration these hormonal changes. A key difference in this therapy, which he calls "neurosteroid replacement therapy," is that women have to take anti-epileptic drugs only a few times each month rather than daily.

Reddy's research on how hormonal cycles impact medication could have implications for other drugs that are given to women. For example, he says, the most commonly used sleeping medications, such as benzodiazepines, may work differently at various phases of the menstrual cycle. Migraine headaches offer another potential opportunity to expand Reddy's research as those that occur around the time of menstruation are often harder to control with conventional medications.

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