

Bottom Line Year Book 2004



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Tntil just recently, medical
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t' l l men and women were
(~' li J physiologically identical,
r@ ~ save for their reproductive
organs. But scientists have now uncovered vital

differences in the ways in which men's and women's bodies function, experience illness and respond to treatments.

Much remains to be explored in the emerging field of gender-specific medicine. However new findings already show that common conditions can be treated much more effectively when gender is taken into consideration

PAIN IN WOMEN

Men and women have different physiological responses to intense pain.

For example, a man's blood pressure rises during intense pain. A woman's blood pressure remains stable or declines, but her heart rate accelerates. This difference has important implications after surgery, when anesthesiologists typically monitor blood pressure to assess a patient's need for painkilling analgesics.

Self-defense: A female surgical patient should request that heart rate be monitored along with blood pressure. If her heart rate increases, more pain medication needs to be administered.

SKIN CANCER IN MEN

More than one million adult Americans are diagnosed with skin cancer each year. Among these cases, white men age 45 or older are

twice as prone as women to the most common skin cancers (basal and squamous cell carcinoma). Men are also more vulnerable to deadly melanoma, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the 7,000 deaths caused by this type of cancer each year.

Marianne J. Legato, MD, founder of the Partnership for Gender-Specific Medicine at Columbia University and a professor of clinical medicine at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons, both in New York City. She is author of *Eve's Rib.. The New Science of Gender-Specific Medicine and How It Can Save Your Life* (Harmony).

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