

Letter to the Editor

## Quantitative assessment of thermal and pain sensitivity

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*Dear Sir,*

I read the paper of Meh and Denišlić (1994) in your journal with interest and I am convinced that the presented methods for assessment of thermal and pain sensitivity are very useful in general. However, it is undoubtedly necessary to object to some of the given results and conclusions.

Median values for heat "pain" threshold around and below 37°C are suggestive that anything but not pain was measured. Otherwise, our own body temperature would be a pain stimulus. Correspondingly, considerable evidence has accumulated that the nociceptor threshold and the subjective pain threshold are clearly above 40°C.

There are obvious methodological reasons for this sort of false heat pain threshold as I explained already somewhere else in detail (Lautenbacher, 1992). Starting a temperature increase from a baseline of 30°C produces premature "pain" responses, which are presumably rather indicative of anxiety than of pain. For this reason, we set our baseline to 40°C. Furthermore, the first few trials should always be excluded from analysis because an approximation to the actual heat pain threshold occurs during these trials when using methods like those described by Meh and

Denišlić. (It does not become apparent in the paper of Meh and Denišlić which trials they used for analysis.)

In consequence, our findings of no sex differences in heat pain thresholds (around 44°C), which we obtained in two studies (Lautenbacher and Strian, 1991; Lautenbacher and Rollman, 1993), are undoubtedly still valid although Meh and Denišlić reported the opposite and heat "pain" thresholds of approximately 37°C. Presumably, the two genders differ in heat pain anticipation but not in heat pain responsiveness.

### References

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