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The response to stress: Does sex play a part?

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The aim of this presentation is to increase ICU nurses' awareness and knowledge regarding differences in gender and response to stress. According to 2011 survey by American Psychological Association more women reported a great deal of stress in their lives, compared with 20% of men. In terms of stress perception, women tend to report stress related to financial and economic issues, whereas men more often cite stress around work-related issues. Women have greater functional connective density in their brains, as measured by functional MRI studies. Not just that, but the way Female brains are connected looks different from how male brains are connected. Women tend to have more inter-hemispheric connections, which actually allow for more connectivity between analytical and intuitive processes, whereas men tend to have more intra-hemispheric connections on the same side of the brain which facilitates more connectivity between kinesthetic tasks and motor skills. More women feel that stress strongly affects their health. In terms of dealing with stress, women are more motivated than men to act on their stress. Does that lead to more action on behalf of women? The answer is no. Both men and women have a fairly high thought/action gap in stress management. To manage stress, it has been shown that women tend to engage in such activities as reading and spending time with family. Men engage more in physical activities, playing sports, and working out. Many studies have found that women are more predisposed to mental stress-induced myocardial ischemia compared with men. Moreover, women are more likely to have a lingering effect of negative emotions, which worsens outcomes as well. The stress management program is a great step forward. It's a huge opportunity for us to intervene at the right time to prevent this as much as possible.

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