

This woman feels almost no pain. Could her genes lead to new treatment for chronic sufferers?

Doctors in Scotland were amazed when a 66-year-old woman underwent what is normally a very painful operation on her hand for severe arthritis and required little to no pain medication afterward. Similarly, two years ago, she was diagnosed with severe osteoarthritis in her hip with significant joint degeneration, yet she complained of no discomfort.

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Thinking the woman's exceptional insensitivity to pain might be rooted in her genes, researchers in the United Kingdom sequenced and analyzed her genome and [found a previously unidentified mutation](#), they reported [March 27] in the [British Journal of Anaesthesia](#). That mutation, in a region they named FAAH-OUT, seems to turn down the activity of a neighboring gene called FAAH.

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While it's risky to make too much of one patient's case, the researchers said their discovery could have exciting implications for the treatment of acute and chronic pain. Prior genetic targets for pain treatment have focused on sodium ion channels and the transmission of pain signals from the peripheral nervous system to the brain. The FAAH and FAAH-OUT genes instead alter how pain signals are interpreted by the brain.

**Read full, original post:** [The case of a woman who feels almost no pain leads scientists to a new gene mutation](#)