

Sacral Neuromodulation in Chronic Pelvic Pain: Understanding Pain Relief Through Functional Restoration

Vecchio F., Alfieri A., Ramirez F., Zimmerman D., Favre G., Gonzalez M.

Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires – Argentina



HYPOTHESIS

CPP often shows discordance between symptom burden and identifiable structural pathology, commonly with LUTS and bowel dysfunction.

Lesion-based models do not fully explain this mismatch.

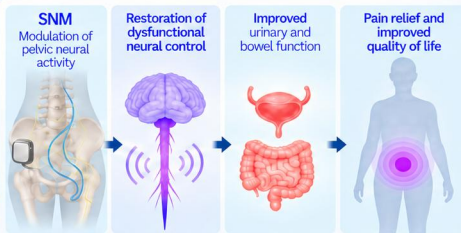
SNM improves urinary, bowel and pain outcomes, but its mechanism in CPP remains incompletely defined.

AIM

Evaluate whether SNM restores dysfunctional pelvic neural networks, with pain relief emerging as a secondary consequence of functional recovery.

A NETWORK-BASED MECHANISM

From neuromodulation to functional recovery



Functional improvement and pain reduction occur in parallel, supporting a network-based mechanism.

RESULTS & INTERPRETATION

- Multidomain benefit**
Improvement across pain, urinary, bowel and quality-of-life domains.
- Reported success rates**
70–85% across heterogeneous CPP populations.
- Functional synchrony**
Pain improvement occurs in parallel with restoration of pelvic organ function.
- Long-term benefit**
Sustained benefit, reduced analgesic use and improved functional status.
- Independent of structural pathology**
Response appears largely independent of identifiable structural pathology.
- Network-based interpretation**
Treatment response appears more closely related to neural network function than to identifiable anatomical abnormalities.

INSIGHTS FROM SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

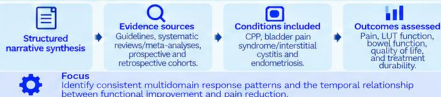


Endometriosis
Persistence of pain despite apparently adequate surgical treatment, yet responsiveness to SNM, challenges lesion-based models.



Bladder pain syndrome / interstitial cystitis
Dissociation between symptom severity and cystoscopic findings supports a functional rather than structural basis.

STUDY DESIGN, MATERIALS AND METHODS



LIMITATIONS

- Heterogeneous populations and study designs.
- Variable outcomes and follow-up duration.
- Causality cannot be definitively established.

CONCLUDING MESSAGE

- SNM in CPP should be conceptualised as a neuromodulatory intervention that restores dysfunctional pelvic neural networks.
- Pain relief may emerge through restoration of pelvic organ function rather than direct analgesia.
- This framework supports function-oriented, phenotype-driven patient selection and may help explain variability in treatment outcomes across heterogeneous populations.