University of Zurich[UZH]

Fear of movement, fear of pain. Why are these fears important to you and your patients?

Dr. Michael L. Meier, PhD

Interdisciplinary Spinal Research
Chiropractic Medicine
University Hospital Balgrist
Zurich, Switzerland
www.painresearch.ch

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Outline

- The Fear Avoidance Model
- Assessment of fear of movement / fear avoidance beliefs
- Supraspinal correlates of fear of movement
- Conclusion

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The Fear Avoidance Model

Vlaeyen et al., 1995

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Introduction
Fear Avoidance Model

Vlaeyen et al., 1995

Behavioral studies

Pain-related fear is an important and strong predictor of disability in chronic low back pain (Vlaeyen et al., 2000; Leeuw et al., 2007; Buchbinder et al., 2008; Wertli et al., 2014)

Functional brain imaging (eg fMRI):

There are no brain correlates of fear of movement (Barke et al., 2012)

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Introduction
Assessment of fear of movement

- **Fear-Avoidance Beliefs Questionnaire (FABQ**
- Fear-Avoidance Pain Scale (FAPS)
- Fear of Pain Questionnaire (FPQ)
- Pain and Anxiety Symptoms Scale (PASS)
- **Tampa Scale for Kinesiophobia (TSK, TSK-G)**

criticism

Review Article

Pain-Related Fear: A Critical Review of the Related Measures

M. Lundberg,[1] A. Grimby-Ekman,[2] J. Verbunt,[3] and M. J. Simmonds[4,5]

More theoretically driven research is needed to support the construct and thus the measurement of pain-related fear.

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Brain correlates of fear of movement

Barke et al., 2012, PAIN

Stimuli

PHODA database

Assessment

Tampa Scale of
Kinesiophobia (TSK)

Classify patients*
into **high** and **low**
«fear of movement»
by means of a median split
(TSK> 35.5)

*non-specific chronic low back pain > 6 months

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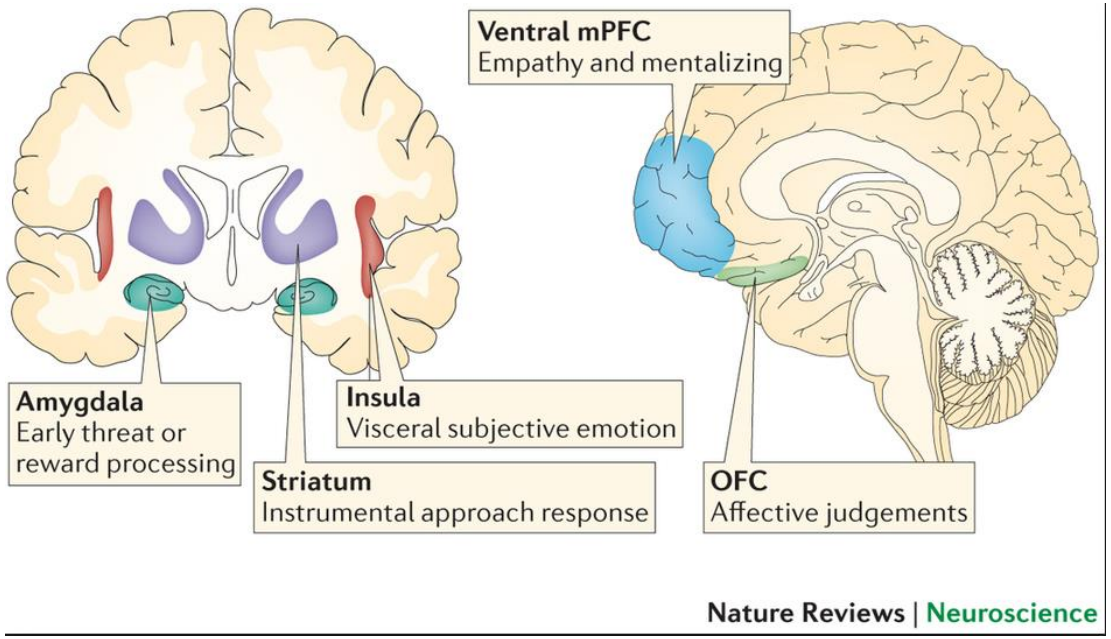
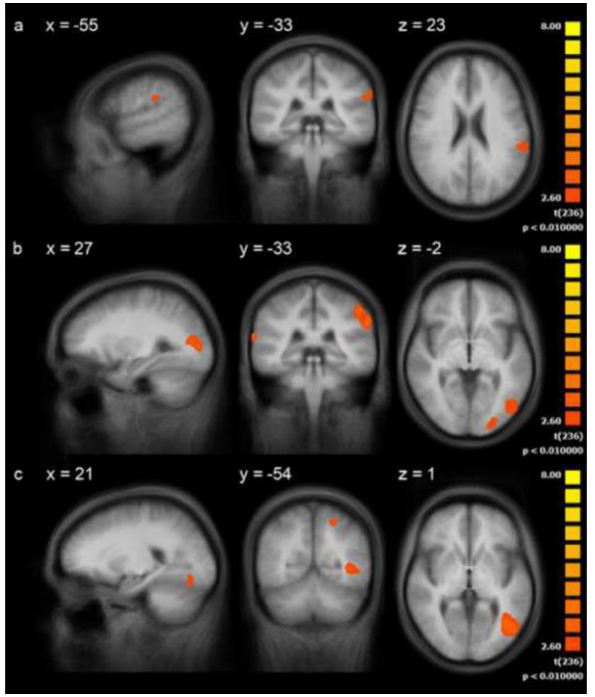
Brain correlates of fear of movement

Human fear network



Contrast high TSK > low TSK

While watching the aversive pictures



Barke et al., 2012

«There was no significant activation in the fear network »

Fear avoidance and neuroimaging: Falsification or just failure to confirm?

Salomons, Davis., 2012

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Brain correlates of fear of movement

Discussion Barke et al., 2012, PAIN

Tim Salomons, PAIN, 2012

- **Suitability of pictures to induce fear of movement ?**
- **Healthy subjects as a control: Non-existent fear avoidance beliefs ?**

Brain correlates of fear of movement in asymptomatic subjects

Meier et al., 2015, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience

Subjects

26 healthy subjects
(15 females, mean age = 29.73, SD = 10.4)

Exclusion criteria
acute and/or recurrent back pain within the last 6 months, past chronic pain episodes, and a history of psychiatric or neurological disorders

Stimuli

video clips with a duration of 4 s that showed potentially harmful activities for the back

A

B

Assessment

Tampa Scale of Kinesiophobia (TSK-G)

Classify subjects into **high** and **low** fear of movement by means of a median split (TSK-G> 35)

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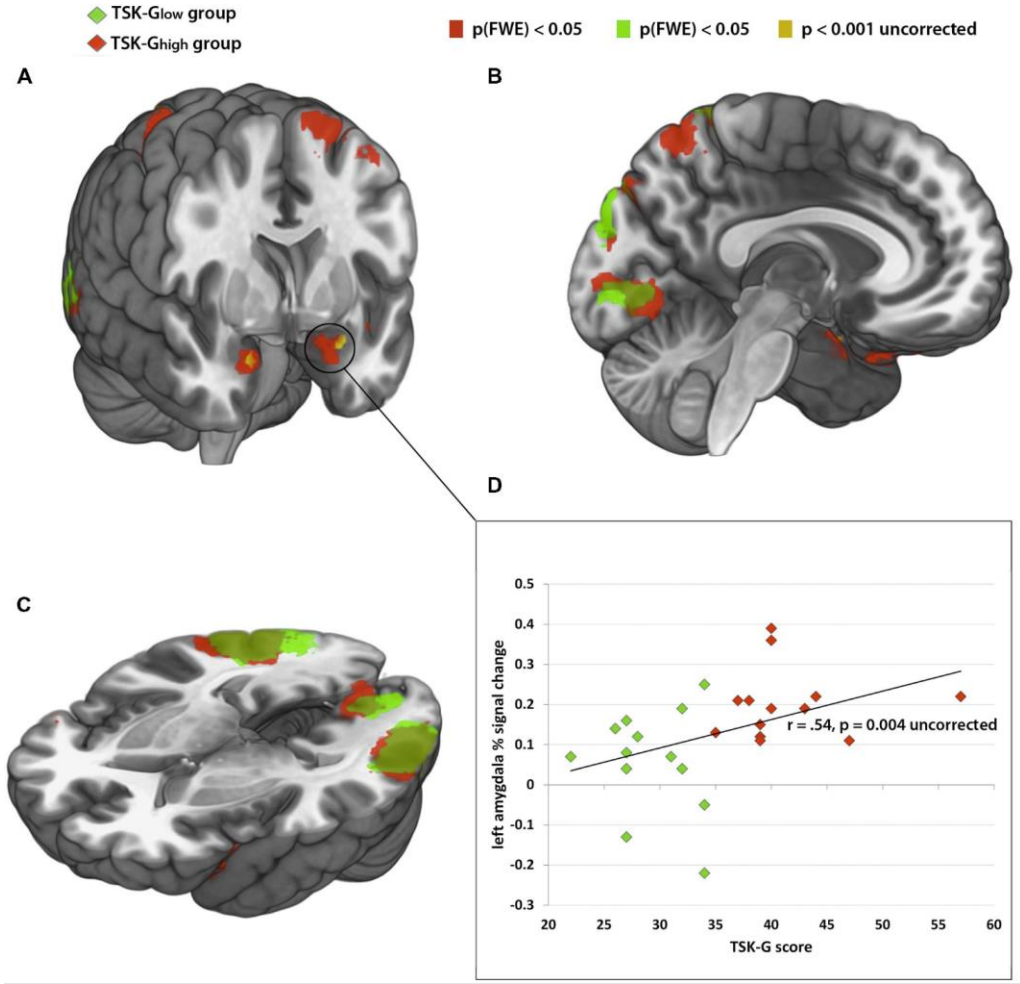
Brain correlates of fear of movement in asymptomatic subjects

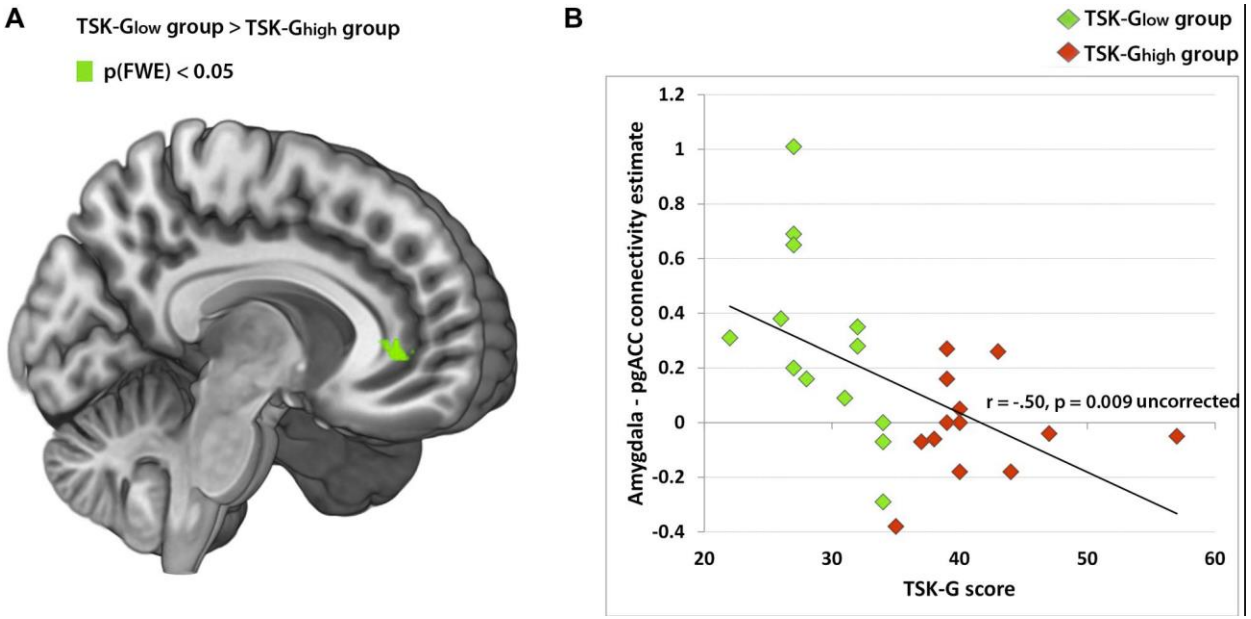
Meier et al., 2015, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience

Results

Brain activation



Functional connectivity amygdala - pgACC



Brain correlates of fear of movement in asymptomatic subjects

Conclusion

A

B

- **Fear of movement and related beliefs (fear avoidance beliefs) do exist in the general pain-free population.**
- **Fear of movement is associated with responses of the amygdala (a key region of the fear network) and the perigenual ACC.**

Vulnerability factor for chronification ?

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Brain correlates of fear of movement in cLBP

Meier et al., 2016, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience

Inclusion criteria for cLBP

- low back pain of at least 6 months.

Exclusion criteria for cLBP

- specific causes for the pain and a history of psychiatric or neurological disorders (ruled out by the clinician).

N = 20
mean age = 39.3 (SD = 13.9)
7 females

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Brain correlates of fear of movement in cLBP

Meier et al., 2016, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience

Stimuli

A

B

Assessment

N = 20
mean age = 32.1 (SD = 10.7)
12 females

Tampa Scale of Kinesiophobia (TSK-G)

N = 20
mean age = 39.3 (SD = 13.9)
7 females

Tampa Scale of Kinesiophobia (TSK)

Age- and gender matched ($p > 0.05$)

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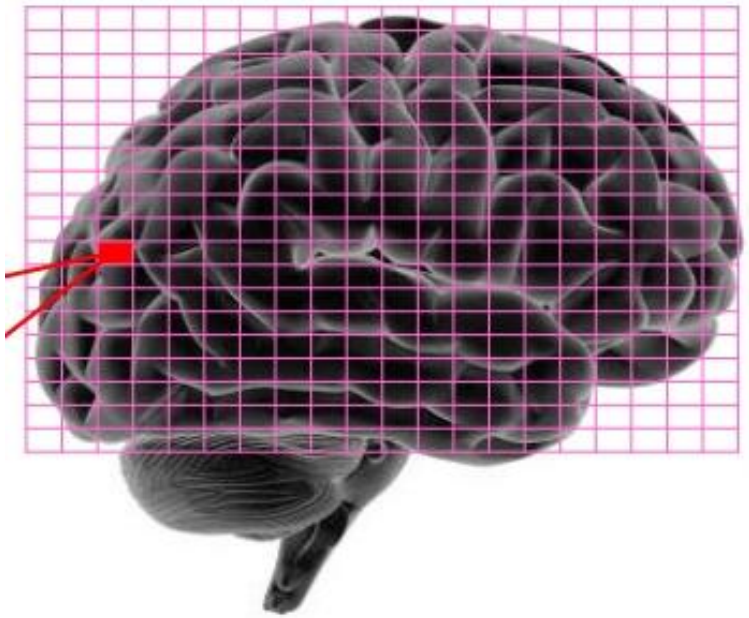
Brain correlates of fear of movement in cLBP

Meier et al., 2016, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience

Whole brain voxel regression analysis

~200’000 voxel



TSK scores

TSKScore17_item	M
37	
40	
40	
38	
39	
40	
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57	
43	
35	
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27	
34	
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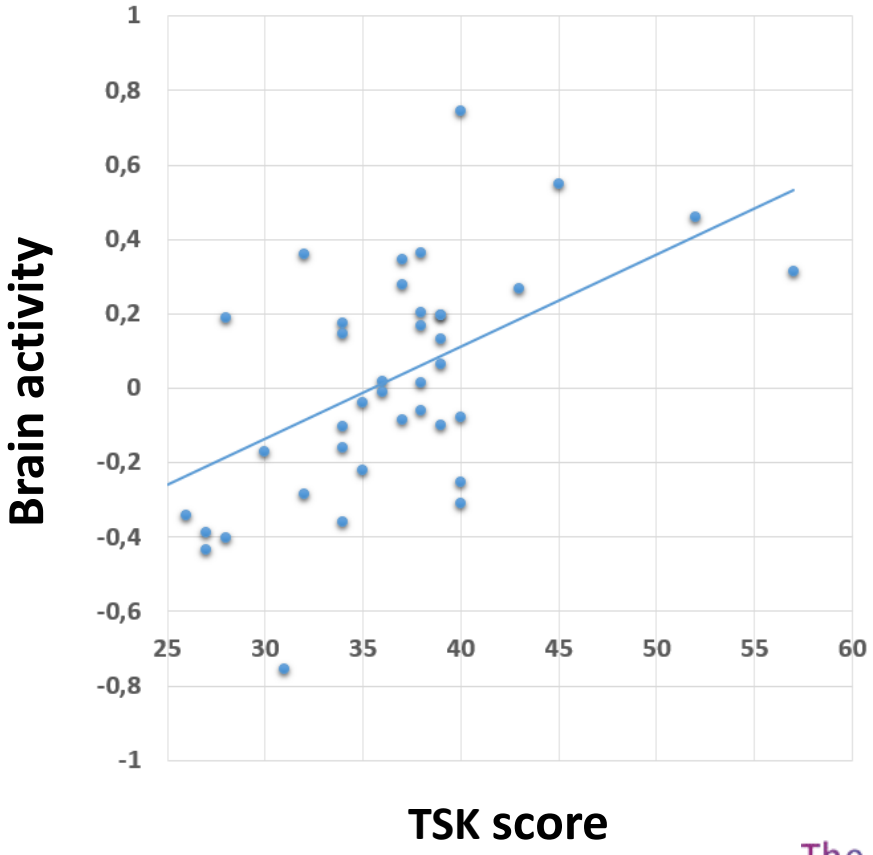

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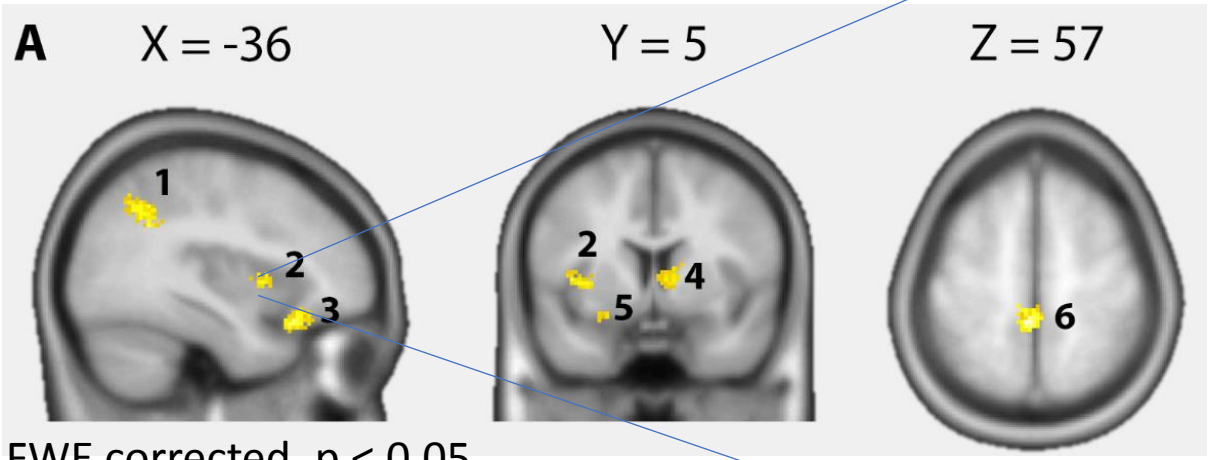
Brain correlates of fear of movement in cLBP

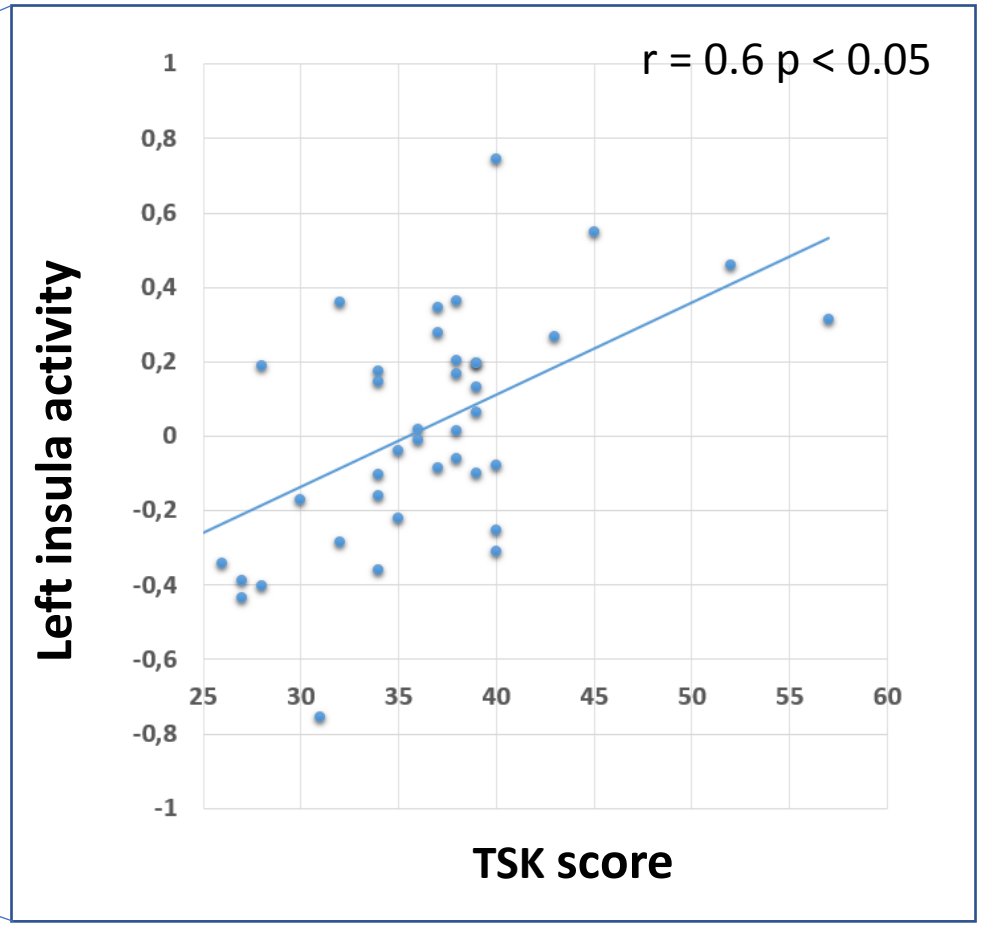
Meier et al., 2016, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience

Brain activation



FWE corrected, $p < 0.05$

1. Left angular gyrus 2. left insula 3.left orbitofrontal cortex (OFC) 4. right caudate 5. left amygdala 6. left postcentral gyrus/precuneus.



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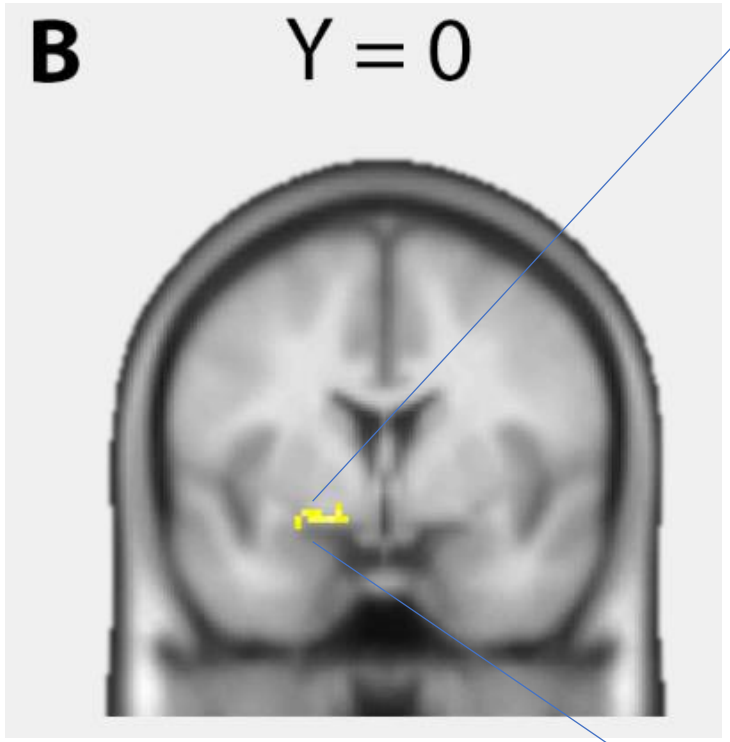
Brain correlates of fear of movement

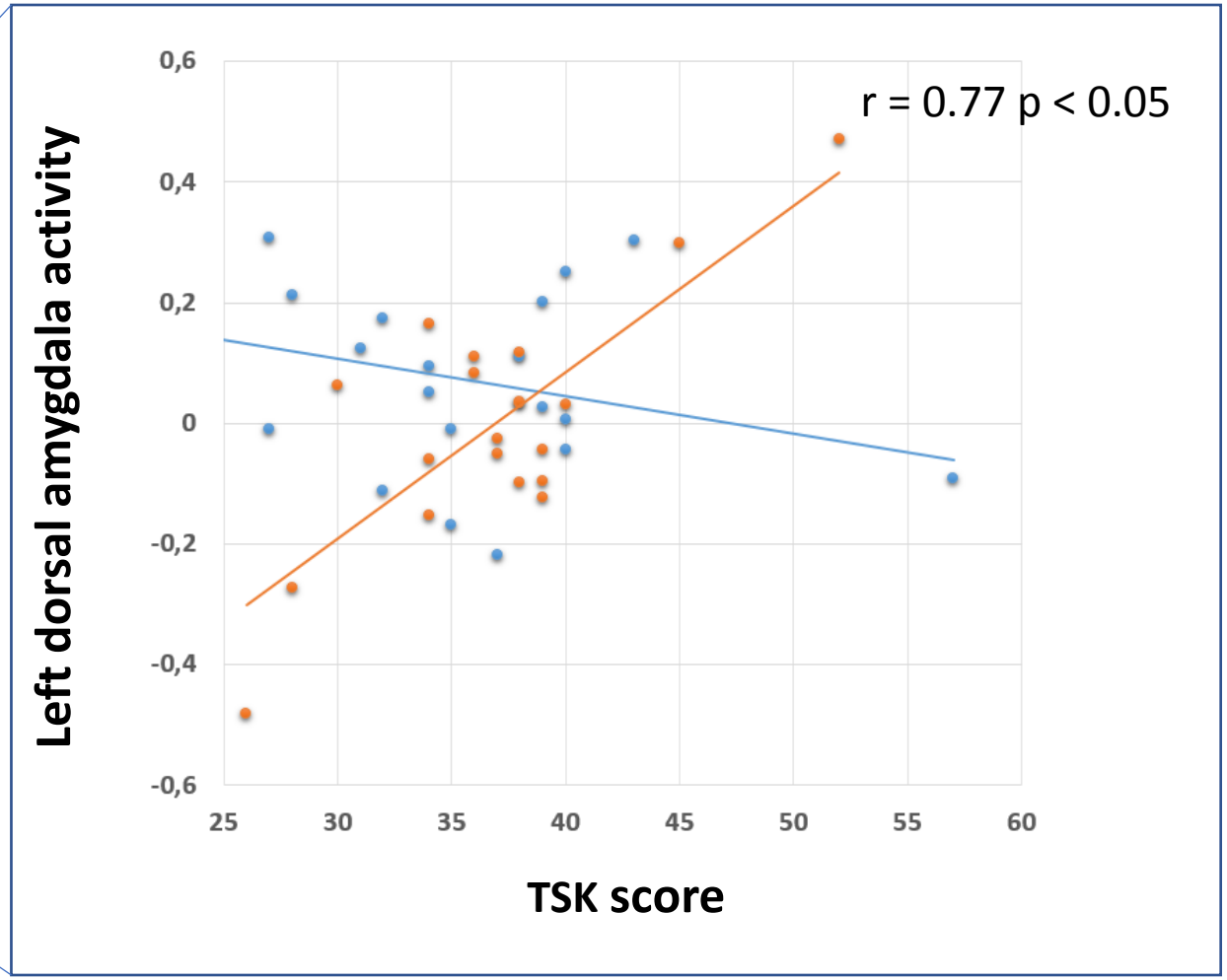
Meier et al., 2016, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience



dorsal amygdala «central nucleus»

cLBP patients (N = 20)

Controls (N = 20)



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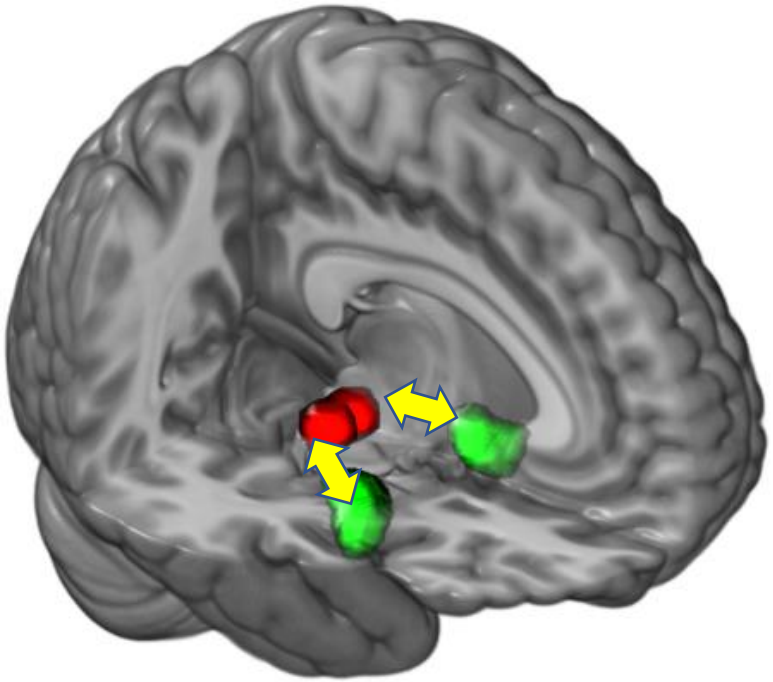
Meier et al., 2017, PAIN Reports

Amygdala – PAG connectivity



Periaqueductal grey (PAG)

- «Gatekeeper» of nociceptive signals
- Key region involved in pain modulation and thought to play an important role in the pathogenesis of chronic pain

Amygdala

- Key region in fear processing
- constitutes an important site for a reciprocal relationship between persistent pain and negative affective states such as fear and anxiety

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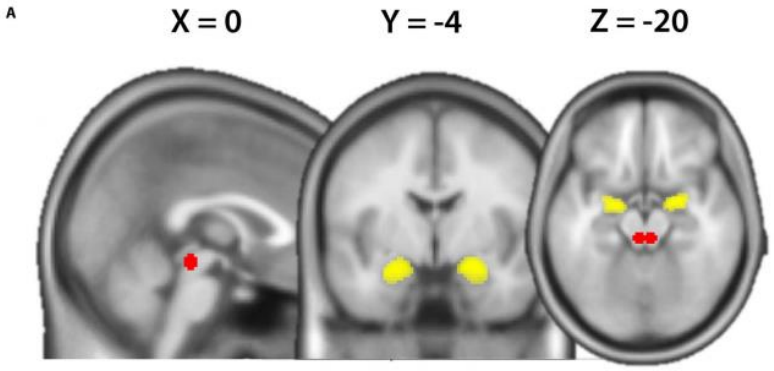
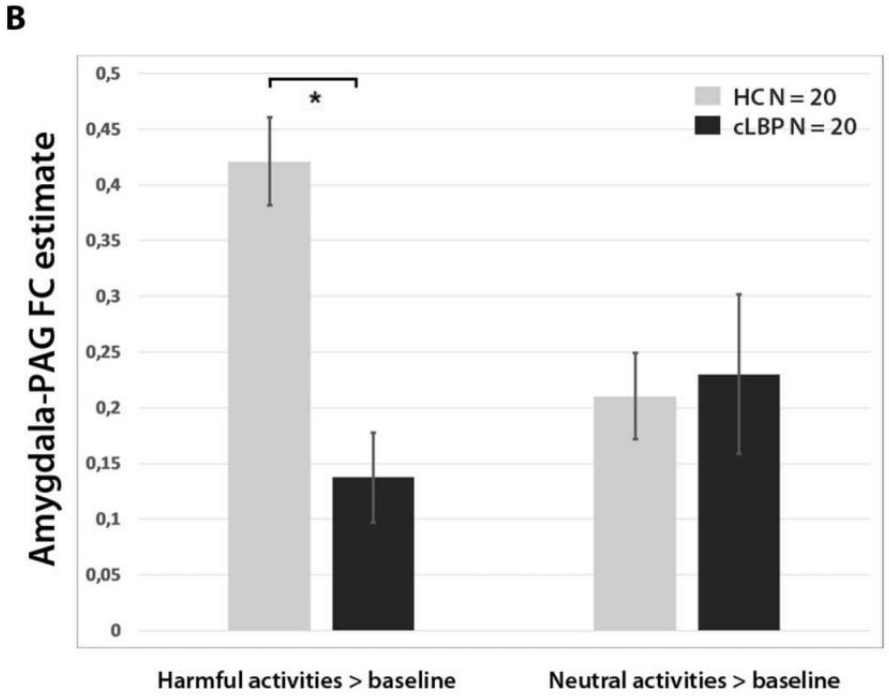
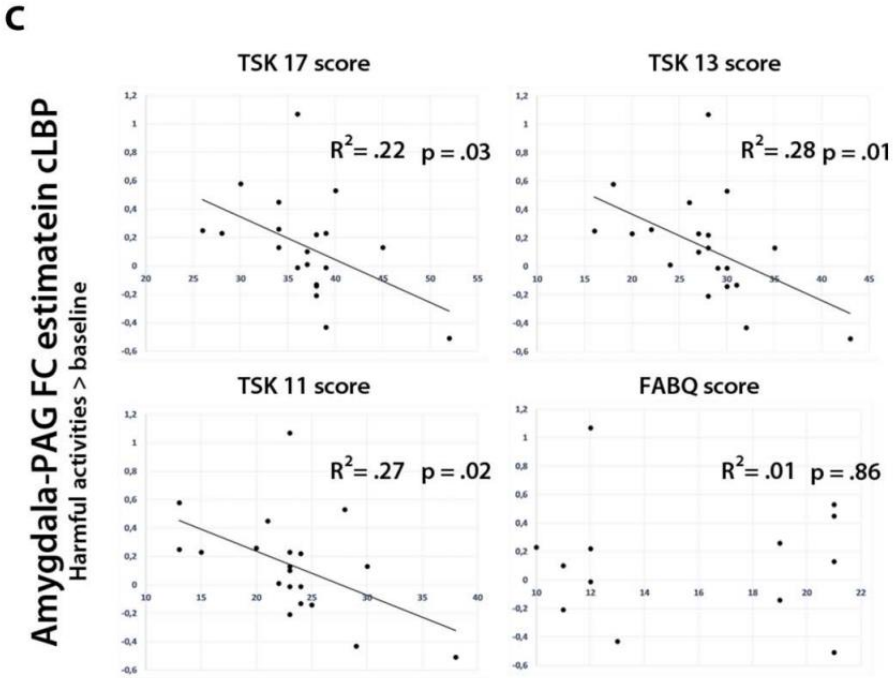
Meier et al., 2017, PAIN Reports



Amygdala

PAG





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Brain correlates of fear of movement

Conclusion and clinical considerations

- **Fear of movement is represented (correlative) in the fear-related brain network of pain-free individuals and cLBP patients**

- **In cLBP patients, the dorsal amygdala plays a key role in the expression of fear of movement**

- **cLBP patients exhibit lower Amygdala-PAG connectivity which is associated with pain-related fear and pronociceptive effects**

Fear avoidance beliefs should be assessed in the acute pain phase to identify «vulnerable» patients

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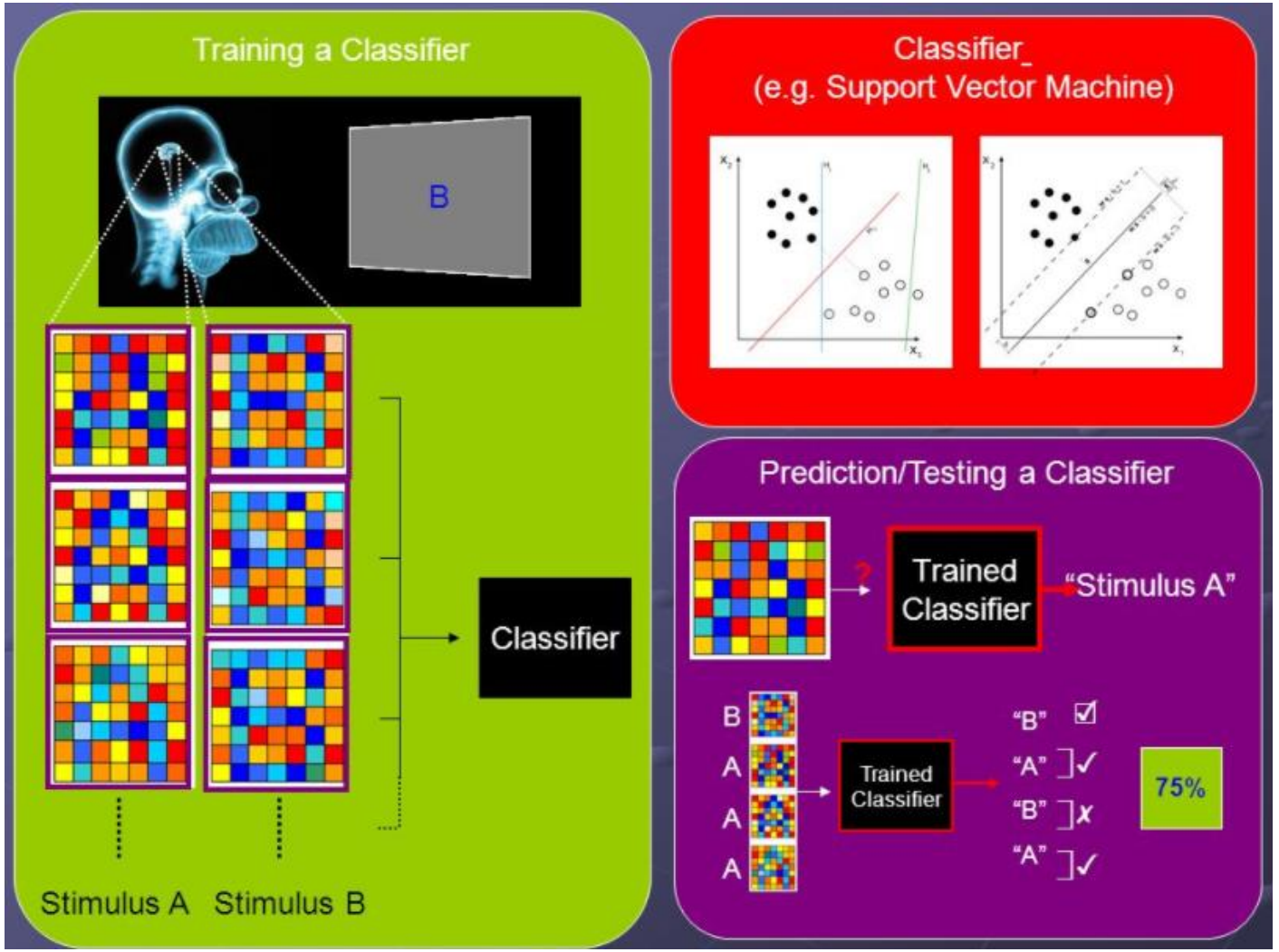
Pattern recognition (machine learning)



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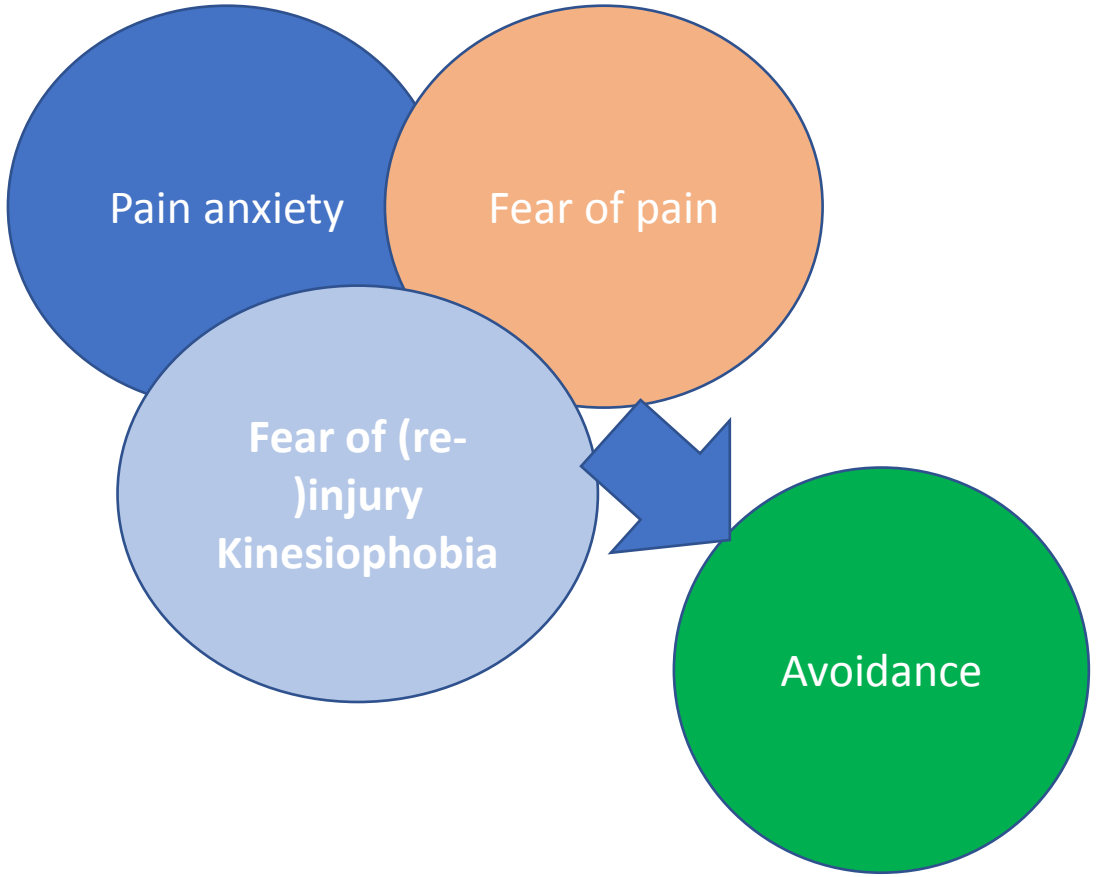
Pattern recognition (machine learning)

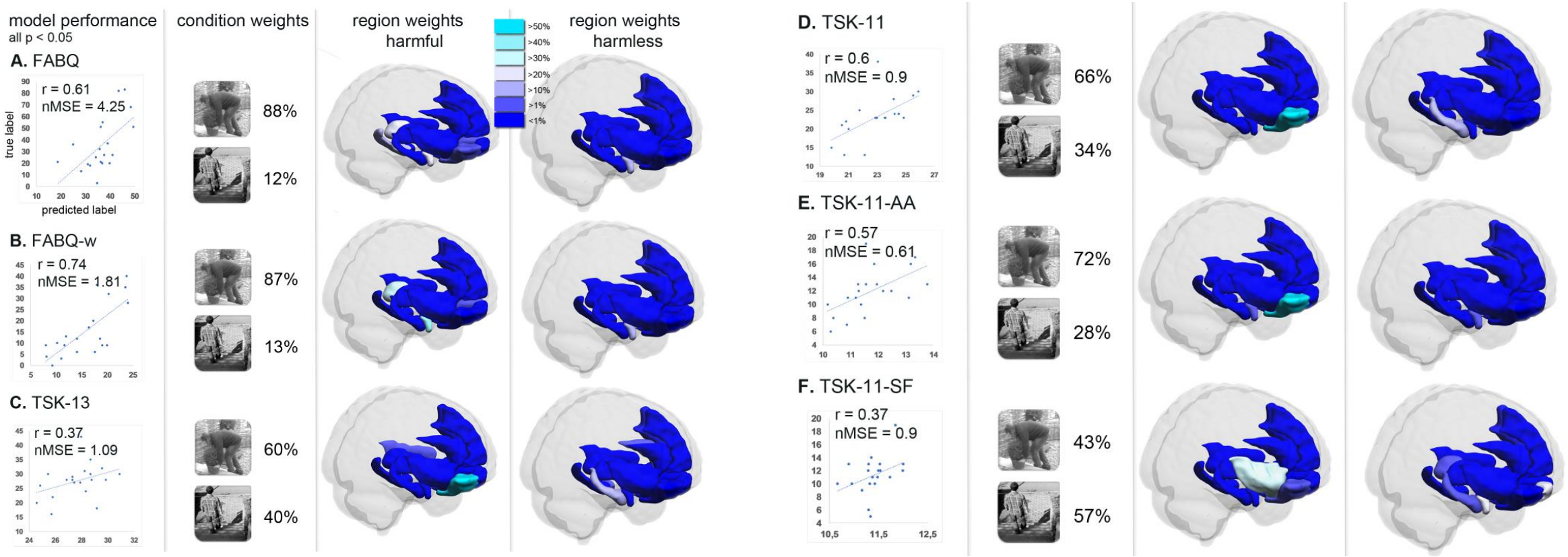
Meier et al., 2018,



- Pain anxiety symptoms scale (PASS)
  - Fear
  - Cognitive
  - Escape / Avoidance
  - Physiological anxiety
- Fear avoidance beliefs questionnaire (FABQ)
  - Activity avoidance
  - Work loss
- Tampa Scale of Kinesiophobia (17-, 13, 11-item version)
  - Physical activity
  - Somatic focus

Pattern recognition (machine learning)

Meier et al., 2018, in review



The diverse fear constructs among self-report measures of pain-related fear seem to be associated with differentially contributing neural sources.

Pattern recognition methods can be used to better understand a psychological construct!

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