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Nociception at the diabetic foot, an uncharted territory

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Abstract

The diabetic foot is characterised by painless foot ulceration and/or arthropathy; it is a typical complication of painless diabetic neuropathy. Neuropathy depletes the foot skin of intraepidermal nerve fibre endings of the afferent A-delta and C-fibres, which are mostly nociceptors and excitable by noxious stimuli only. However, some of them are cold or warm receptors whose functions in diabetic neuropathy have frequently been reported. Hence, it is well established by quantitative sensory testing (QST) that thermal perception thresholds at the foot skin increase during the course of painless diabetic neuropathy. Noxious pain perception (nociception), by contrast,