

## Err on a G-spot



By Tom Geoghegan  
BBC News Magazine

The G-spot - the mysterious female erogenous zone - may not actually exist, says new research. But has the quest to find it helped or hindered womankind?

For years, it has been described as the Holy Grail of female sexual pleasure.

But for many women and their partners, the quest to find the so-called G-spot has ended in frustration.

Now new research suggests this elusive, erogenous zone supposed to be located on the front vaginal wall, may not exist.

“Someone said: 'Why not call it the Whipple Tickle?'”

Sexologist Beverly Whipple, who coined the term G-spot

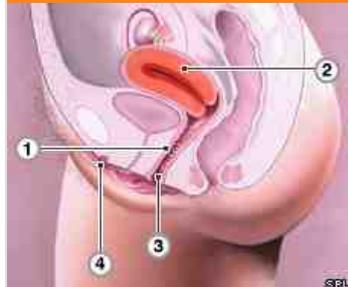
A study of nearly 2,000 female twins by King's College London, found no evidence of the spot, based on the experiences of women who share similar genes.

Many scientists and doctors have long doubted its existence, while women's magazines have feasted on the notion it is real, with countless how-to-find guides and articles about G-enriched sex lives.

The latest finding is unlikely to put an end to debate about the G-spot. But why have we been so preoccupied with it?

It all began in 1950, when German scientist Ernst Grafenberg claimed that stimulation of a sensitive area on the front wall of the vagina could trigger female orgasm.

### G MARKS THE SPOT



1: Area in which G-spot said to be, although its location and existence is questioned

2: Uterus

3: Vagina

4: Clitoris

The term itself is much more recent - having been popularised by academic Beverly Whipple, along with John Perry in 1982, with their book *The G-Spot and Other Recent Discoveries About Human Sexuality*. The work was based on the apparent discovery of G-spots in hundreds of women they interviewed.

They first coined the term in the late 1970s, when addressing conferences about their work in trying to prove Grafenberg's theory.

"Someone said: 'Why not call it the Whipple Tickle?'" says Professor Whipple, speaking from Rutgers University in New Jersey.

"But I said: 'No, we are going to name it after Dr Grafenberg.' Then we included it in scientific papers before the book came out."

### 'Liberation from ignorance'

Prior to its publication, her appearance on a television discussion show prompted a huge response.

"I received 5,000 letters from men and women who said that, at last, someone was validating their own experiences."

### CLAIRE RAYNER'S VIEW



'When the word G-spot was first used

When the word G-spot was first used, there was a lot of fuss and magazines made a lot of it. I remember writing about it for Woman's Own and I said at the time I thought it was rubbish. The idea that there was this one wonderful element that made the earth move during sex and threw you three feet into the air. People always expect too much of sex. It's fun but not the be all and end all. I'm delighted that more research has come up with more evidence that's it's nonsense'

**G-spot 'doesn't appear to exist'**

"Some women even said they had had operations to stop them having orgasms, because they didn't know what was happening. Some thought they were urinating."

Although her work liberated many people from ignorance and fear about their own bodies, Ms Whipple says it also had unfortunate and unforeseen consequences, years later.

"In recent years, every time someone publishes a book entitled How to Find the G-Spot, or How to Ejaculate, it's putting pressure on women.

Finding the G-spot became a goal in itself, rather than one of several forms of stimulation, says Ms Whipple.

"But that's not what we did the research for. It was to make people feel better about themselves. There's not one set sexual response in women."

It's like they have taken my work and twisted it into something that wasn't intended, she says, while dismissing the "flimsy" Kings College study because it discounted the experiences of lesbians and included sexual positions in which the G-spot was less likely to be stimulated.

**Hopes raised**

Other experts in the field of female sexuality think the cult of the G-spot has been nothing but detrimental for women, feeding anxiety among women and men.

"It's important to feel that we are normal physically and sexually, and to conform to what society is saying is attractive sexually," says sexual psychotherapist Paula Hall.

"One of the problems of the so-called discovery of the G-spot, and the amazing orgasms to be enjoyed if your partner can find it, was that it left women and men - who before were thinking that their sexual life was OK - thinking that something was missing."

The reality is that we are all different and therefore some women may feel things like a G-spot but for others it could be tiny, she says.

Many women don't enjoy penetrative sex, but the G-spot raised expectations of orgasm through penetration.

Anything that tries to tell you 'This is the norm and this is how you should enjoy sex' just creates more sexual anxiety, says Ms Hall.



Women frankly discussing their orgasms over coffee may be confined to a small, cosmopolitan class, says sex and relationship psychotherapist Mary Clegg.

'Many young women are very shy and very modest

'I have run workshops in country towns and women - solicitors, accountants, high-flying executives, check-out girls, from all walks of life and all ages - have been absolutely terrified to discuss these subjects in a liberated way'

No-one really knows whether it exists or not, says psychotherapist Mary Clegg, chair of the British Association of Sexual Educators, but the male-dominated medical profession is so keen to learn more about female orgasm that a mythology with unhelpful labels has developed.

"We don't fully understand female sexuality and we don't understand how it all works, which is unbelievable in the 21st Century."

It doesn't help that the media is still obsessed with sexual performance and that's not healthy, she says.

"People in this country are woefully inadequate in sexual technique, despite all the magazines. It's about the quality of information given and the expertise of the writer."

What the G-spot did, says Petra Boynton, also a sexual psychologist, was that it gave magazine editors the

opportunity to talk about sex in a sanitised way that met reader demands for such discussions but without offending advertisers.

"It was a boon because it doesn't sound as rude as vagina or penetration. Even penis is rarely used. And ask any journalist if their editor will let them use the C-word, clitoris, and they will say 'no'.

**ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT**

'Couples need to be open and communicate. There are good resources but people need to know where to go for them

'There are videos and books that can help them. They should try new things and if they fall off the bed and laugh, then that's fine. Does it matter?

'People have lost their sense of pleasure and fun that a good sexual relationship can bring them, and not focus on something that might not be possible'

Source: Mary Clegg

"The G-spot allowed you to go looking for something without saying what it was."

But the G-spot also became a commercial product, she says, and ill-informed people selling toys to stimulate it would pop up in magazines giving questionable advice.

"It fools everyone to think we are so liberated but if you read these articles, most people don't have a clue about what they should be doing. The mythology has partly been driven by the media. And if Cosmo is talking about it then everyone is talking about it."

Identifying a spot inevitably means that while you liberate some women you make others feel inadequate, because we are all different, she says.

But despite the odd flurry of publicity when more research questions or supports its existence, the G-spot's heyday of the late 80s and early 90s has passed.

The new G-spot, she says, is hormones. Women, do you have the right ones?