

COMBINED ANTIDEPRESSANT THERAPY

DEAR SIR,

I read with interest the letter by Doctors Man and Aleem in the January 1972 *Journal* issue, p. 120, in which they state 'great danger indeed exists in combining the tricyclic drugs and MAOI's in large dosage'. This in reference to a comatose woman who had consumed beer and was self-medicating with 15 drugs including a laxative.

The only conclusion that I can draw from their letter is that the woman must have been one of the most unfortunate patients in Michigan. Why this 'attractive', 'white', 'blonde', 'schizophrenic' woman should ever have received MAOI's or tricyclic antidepressants or the rest of her smörgåsbord is beyond me. It is only surprising that she was robust enough to tolerate such mammoth amounts of noxious material. Why one could conclude 'this is a case of toxic psychosis which was the result of taking large amounts of MAOI and other psychotropic drugs' is also beyond me. It would seem just as appropriate to claim that this was a state of toxic psychosis produced by an anti-parkinson agent alone or in combination with a barbiturate or any permutation of the 13 other drugs.

My own opinion is that the combination of some of the terrible Mid-Western beers and a laxative would produce this nearly every time.

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PRISONERS OF XYY CONSTITUTION

DEAR SIR,

I have read with interest the findings of Griffiths (1971) and the subsequent letter of Eysenck and Eysenck (1972). It appears from the findings of Griffiths and the re-scoring using a different key from the Eysencks that the prisoners with an XYY chromosome constitution tend to be introverted both in terms of clinical assessment of their life histories and by achieving low extraversion scores.

We have been concerned with prisoners and security patients found to have sex chromosome abnormalities, and have routinely, where possible, administered the Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI). In some cases the lack of intelligence or severity of the illness of the prisoner-patient made the administration of such a test impossible.

We have now identified 17 gonosomal abnormalities in males: 8 with the double Y constitution and 9 demonstrating the multiple X (one case of 48,XXYY

is considered as multiple X). Of these, 11 completed the MPI, and our findings are presented below with the earlier findings regarding the general prisoner population (Bartholomew, 1963). It would appear

	General prisoner population (N=150)	Double Y (N=5)	Multiple X (N=6)
Extraversion:			
Mean score	15.86	17.40	11.33
Standard deviation ..	3.78	3.87	2.98
Neuroticism:			
Mean score	15.25	10.20	12.00
Standard deviation ..	4.68	2.72	3.95

from our findings that 'in both the double Y and multiple X cases there is a not dissimilar neuroticism score which is below previously ascertained means for male prisoners. It is also apparent that the double Y cases have an extraversion score close to the prisoner norms, whereas the multiple X cases tend to be introverted, being some one standard deviation from the prisoner mean' (Bartholomew, 1971).

The number of cases investigated both by us and by Griffiths is, of course, very small, and one cannot be over-dogmatic on the basis of a mere 15 subjects. What is required is further research to clarify many unresolved questions.

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CLUSTER ANALYSIS

DEAR SIR,

In his recent paper on problems in using cluster analysis (*Journal*, February 1972, 120, 143) I note that one of the studies Mr. B. S. Everitt refers to is mine (*Journal*, March 1971, 118, 275). Lest by default I should stand convicted of naivety, I must point out that the main difficulties he discusses were also referred to in my paper. Amongst these are non-exhaustiveness of the procedures with risk of sub-optimal solutions; uncertainty as to the number of

groups; the necessity to condense data and the utility of principal component analysis for that purpose; the power of the procedures to produce apparent clusters in homogeneous data; the resulting necessity for cautious conclusions, and further validation. In my own study the hierarchical nature of successive groupings strongly indicated that they were real rather than accidental. Mr. Everitt's approach to this problem (*Journal*, October 1971, 119, 399) of carrying out analyses by several different clustering methods is a valuable one, although the limited availability until recently of suitable programmes, and the enormous amount of computer time that they require, has put it out of the reach of most investigators.

It is important to note, however, that many similar criticisms can be levelled at factor analysis, which has also been used in studies of classification. For instance, many alternative methods of factor analysis have been described; criteria for rotations and deciding on the number of factors are arbitrary, and the choice of alternative solutions is highly dependent on subjective interpretation. Many of these multivariate procedures are better regarded as exploratory and hypothesis-generating, rather than hypothesis-testing. Moreover, factor analysis has a serious disadvantage in this context in that it is based on a model of orthogonal and continuous dimensions. An individual may score high or low on several factors simultaneously, a situation very different from that of membership in one of a set of mutually exclusive groups. I do not wish to decry the value of a continuum view of psychiatric classification in some circumstances, but it is still much more often a concept of diagnostic groups which underlies clinical thinking and research studies.

It would be a pity if the problems Mr. Everitt points out were allowed to obscure the considerable advantage cluster analytic techniques have over factor analysis in studies seeking diagnostic groupings, in that they are based on the appropriate model of discrete groups.

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THE PRICE OF BOOKS.

DEAR SIR,

The books of Charles C. Thomas & Co., of Springfield, Illinois, are frequently reviewed in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*; one sixth of the reviewed books in the past three issues containing reviews (November 1971, January and February 1972) originated from them.

To test a casual impression that their books were more expensive than the generality of books reviewed,

I have compared the average page cost, in cents, to the customer, of Thomas's books with books from other publishers. I used the average page cost rather than the average book cost, for Thomas may be making bigger books. Unpriced books, cheap paperbacks and books priced in other currencies than dollars or pounds are excluded. The dollar conversion rate used was \$2.60 (*Times* 2.3.72).

	No. of books	Average page cost	Relation to overall average cost
Charles C. Thomas ..	19	4.4 c	+26%
Other publishers' books priced in pounds sterling	66	3.2 c	-9%
Other publisher's books priced in U.S. dollars	18	3.5 c	0%
Total books	103	3.5 c	

The table makes it perfectly clear that Charles C. Thomas charge a great deal more for their books than do other publishers, English or American. There may, of course, be a good reason for this difference—Thomas, for example, may publish worthwhile but recondite work necessitating small editions and consequently high production costs per book. But books should be cheap and publishers not make undue profits from disseminating knowledge, and it seemed worthwhile, therefore, to bring this cost comparison to the notice of those who buy books either for themselves or on behalf of libraries.

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DEAR SIR,

In reply to Dr. Barraclough, I would say that he is being critical without providing a really thorough consideration of many different matters.

Dr. Barraclough does say that one reason for our high prices may be because we 'may publish worthwhile but recondite works necessitating small editions and consequently high production costs per book'. This consideration alone would explain higher retail prices, because small editions, with higher costs per copy therefore, must necessarily have higher retail prices. A publisher cannot produce fifteen hundred copies of an edition, or two thousand copies, and have a retail price, based on number of pages, comparable to a textbook which may be printed in much larger quantities.

We determine our retail prices by multiplying our costs per copy times four and taking the closest