

King's College London enquiry into publications authored by Professor Hans Eysenck with Professor Ronald Grossarth- Maticek

May 2019

The Principal of King's College London asked the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) to set up a committee to examine publications authored by Professor Hans Eysenck with Professor Ronald Grossarth-Maticek.

Professor Eysenck left the employment of the Institute of Psychiatry (IoP) in 1983 and is now deceased. Professor Grossarth-Maticek is listed as associated with the University of Heidelberg. A letter written by Professor Stuart Checkley (Checkley 1993) informed the committee that although Prof Eysenck was employed at the IoP, Professor Grossarth-Maticek had never been employed as an academic at the IoP despite this appearing as his affiliation on many of the papers. We have therefore not investigated any papers where Grossarth-Maticek was an author if the paper was not jointly authored by an employee of the IoP.

The purpose of the committee is to ascertain (as far as possible) that the joint publications were safe in terms of presenting scientifically rigorous results relating personality factors with cancer, coronary heart disease, and other outcomes. The chair of the committee was independent of King's College London and the IoPPN.

The committee considered all the articles in peer review journals where the two authors appeared together and analysed data relevant to personality and physical health outcomes. There were two main types of papers, reports of observational cohort studies and those describing the impact of a specific type of psychological treatment developed by Grossarth-Maticek. Several papers report on data

from one or the other or both, and the committee took the view that they would investigate general issues on both types of studies that had been discussed in the literature.

1. The **observational reports** were based on a large data set collected from the residents of Crvenka, Yugoslavia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, together with cohort studies conducted in Heidelberg, Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. Both were followed up for 15-20 years. The primary focus was on whether specially devised measures of personality could predict the development of cancer, coronary heart disease and all-cause mortality. The data were also used to examine factors such as alcohol, coffee and soft drink consumption, physical activity and smoking in relation to survival (see Appendix for list of papers).

2. The **interventional reports** are based on the impact of a therapy programme variously called Creative Novation Behaviour Therapy or 'Maudsley Intervention' administered in individual or group-based formats, or as a form of bibliotherapy based on written text.

The committee did not have access to any data but have carried out an assessment based on the current literature which includes peer reviewed papers and reviews from critics as well as from collaborators. We also identified some attempted replications of the results either from data available on the jointly authored studies or new studies (for example, Amelang, SchmidtRathjens et al. 1996, Amelang 1997).

Assessment

The same Checkley letter (see above) informed the committee that the studies cited or described in the jointly authored papers had not been considered by an

ethics committee at the IoP. They were also not part of the strategy of the joint research committee of the Institute of Psychiatry and the Maudsley Hospital. It is therefore not possible to review a protocol or an ethical assessment of the studies described. We do not know if they were reviewed by another ethics committee.

Concerns about this body of research were raised as early as the late 1980s. An entire issue of Psychological Inquiry (1991, Vol 2, part 3) was devoted to critiques from leading authorities in psycho-oncology and medical statistics, and the issues have been cogently summarized by Pelosi and Appleby (1993) and Pelosi (in press). The concerns are based on two issues. First, the validity of the datasets, in terms of recruitment of participants, administration of measures, reliability of outcome ascertainment, biases in data collection, absence of relevant covariates, and selection of cases analysed in each article. Second, the implausibility of the results presented, many of which show effect sizes virtually unknown in medical science. For example, the relative risk of dying of cancer for individuals with 'cancer-prone' personality compared with healthy personality was over 100, while the risk of cancer mortality was reduced 80% by bibliotherapy. These findings are incompatible with modern clinical science and the understanding of disease processes.

We have not identified replications of the intervention studies but attempts to replicate the personality effects have not found the same or even similar results (e.g. Amelang 1997; Amelang et al 1996).

The Committee shared the concerns made by the critics of this body of work. We have come to the conclusion that we consider the published results of studies that included the results of the analyses of data collected as part of the intervention or observational studies to be unsafe and that the editors of the journals should be informed of our decision. We have highlighted 26 papers (Appendix 1) which

were published in 11 journals which are still in existence (see list of journals and editors Appendix 2). We recommend that the Principal write to the editors of these journals to inform them that, based on our enquiry, we consider the results and conclusions of these studies are unsafe.

The Director of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity at King's has written to the academic lead for research misconduct at the University of Heidelberg to confirm Professor Ronald Grossarth-Maticsek's affiliation with them at the time in question, and to clarify their procedure for investigating allegations of research misconduct.

References

Amelang, M. (1997). "Using personality variables to predict cancer and heart disease." European Journal of Personality **11**(5): 319-342.

Amelang, M., C. SchmidtRathjens and G. Matthews (1996). "Personality, cancer and coronary heart disease: Further evidence on a controversial issue." British Journal of Health Psychology **1**: 191-205.

Checkley, S. (1993). "Letter to the Editor: Personality and Fatal Diseases." British Medical Journal **307**.

Pelosi, A. (In Press). "Personality and fatal diseases: revisiting a scientific scandal." Journal of Health Psychology.

Pelosi, A. J. and L. Appleby (1993). "Personality and Fatal Diseases." British Medical Journal **306**(6893): 1666-1667.

Appendix 1

Papers considered unsafe

1. Eysenck, H. J. and R. Grossarth-Maticek (1989). "Prevention of Cancer and Coronary Heart- Disease and the Reduction in the Cost of the National-Health-Service." Journal of Social Political and Economic Studies **14**(1): 25-47.
2. Eysenck, H. J. and R. Grossarth-Maticek (1991). "Creative novation behavior-therapy as a prophylactic treatment for cancer and coronary heart-disease .2. effects of treatment." Behaviour Research and Therapy **29**(1): 17-31.
3. Eysenck, H. J. and R. Grossarth-Maticek (1993). "Creative novation behavior-therapy as a prophylactic treatment for cancer and coronary heart-disease .1.2. (vol 29, pg 1, 1991)." Behaviour Research and Therapy **31**(4): 437-437 erratum
4. Eysenck, H. J., R. Grossarth-Maticek and B. Everitt (1991). "Personality, stress, smoking, and genetic predisposition as synergistic risk factors for cancer and coronary heart disease." Integr Physiol Behav Sci **26**(4): 309-322.
5. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. Eysenck, G. Gallasch, H. Vetter and R. Frentzelbeyme (1991). "Changes in degree of sclerosis as a function of prophylactic treatment in cancer-prone and chd-prone probands." Behaviour Research and Therapy **29**(4): 343-351.
6. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1989). "Is media information that smoking causes illness a self-fulfilling prophecy." Psychological Reports **65**(1): 177-178.
7. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1990). "Coffee-drinking and personality as factors in the genesis of cancer and coronary heart-disease." Neuropsychobiology **23**(3): 153-159.
8. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1990). "Personality, smoking, and alcohol as synergistic risk-factors for cancer of the mouth and pharynx." Psychological Reports **67**(3): 1024-1026.
9. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1990). "Personality, Stress And Disease - Description And Validation Of A New Inventory." Psychological Reports **66**(2): 355-373.
10. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1990). "Prophylactic Effects Of Psychoanalysis On Cancer-Prone And Coronary Heart Disease-Prone Probands, As Compared With Control- Groups And Behavior-Therapy Groups." Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry **21**(2): 91-99.
11. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1991). "Coca-Cola, Cancers, And Coronaries - Personality And Stress As Mediating Factors." Psychological Reports **68**(3): 1083-1087.
12. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1991). "Creative Novation Behavior-Therapy As A Prophylactic Treatment For Cancer And Coronary Heart-Disease .1. Description Of Treatment." Behaviour Research and Therapy **29**(1): 1-16.

13. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1991). "Personality, Stress, And Motivational Factors In Drinking As Determinants Of Risk For Cancer And Coronary Heart-Disease." Psychological Reports **69**(3): 1027-1043.
14. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1995). "Self-Regulation And Mortality From Cancer, Coronary Heart-Disease, And Other Causes - A Prospective-Study." Personality and Individual Differences **19**(6): 781-795.
15. Grossarth-Maticek, R. and H. J. Eysenck (1989). "Length of survival and lymphocyte percentage in women with mammary cancer as a function of psychotherapy." Psychol Rep **65**(1): 315-321.
16. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck and P. Barrett (1993). "Prediction Of Cancer And Coronary Heart-Disease As A Function Of Method Of Questionnaire Administration." Psychological Reports **73**(3): 943-959.
17. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck and G. J. Boyle (1995). "Alcohol-Consumption And Health - Synergistic Interaction With Personality." Psychological Reports **77**(2): 675-687.
18. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck and G. J. Boyle (1995). "Method Of Test Administration As A Factor In Test Validity - The Use Of A Personality Questionnaire In The Prediction Of Cancer And Coronary Heart-Disease." Behaviour Research and Therapy **33**(6): 705-710.
19. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck and G. J. Boyle (1994). "An empirical study of the diathesis-stress theory of disease." International Journal of Stress Management **1**(1): 3-18.
20. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck, G. J. Boyle, J. Heep, S. D. Costa and I. J. Diel (2000). "Interaction of psychosocial and physical risk factors in the causation of mammary cancer, and its prevention through psychological methods of treatment." J Clin Psychol **56**(1): 33-50.
21. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck, G. J. Boyle, J. Heep, S. D. Costa and I. J. Diel (2000). "Interaction of psychosocial and physical risk factors in the causation of mammary cancer, and its prevention through psychological methods of treatment (vol 56, pg 33, 2000)." Journal of Clinical Psychology **56**(6): 829-829.
22. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck, A. Pfeifer, P. Schmidt and G. Koppel (1997). "The specific action of different personality risk factors on cancer of the breast, cervix, corpus uteri and other types of cancer: A prospective investigation." Personality and Individual Differences **23**(6): 949-960.
23. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck, H. Rieder and L. Rakic (1990). "Psychological-Factors As Determinants Of Success In Football And Boxing - The Effects Of Behavior-Therapy." International Journal of Sport Psychology **21**(3): 237-255.
24. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck, G. Uhlenbruck, H. Rieder, H. Vetter, C. Freesemann, L. Rakic, G.

Gallasch, D. T. Kanazir and H. Liesen (1990). "Sport Activity And Personality As Elements In Preventing Cancer And Coronary Heart-Disease." Perceptual and Motor Skills **71**(1): 199-209.

25. Grossarth-Maticek, R., H. J. Eysenck and H. Vetter (1988). "Personality Type, Smoking Habit And Their Interaction As Predictors Of Cancer And Coronary Heart-Disease." Personality and Individual Differences **9**(2): 479-495.

Appendix 2

Addresses of Editors of journal that published potentially unsafe results

Professor Roger Pearson (Editor)

Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies

Council for Social and Economic Studies
PO Box 34143

Washington DC 20043, USA

and is responsible for reference 1.

Michelle G. Craske (Editor) Behaviour Research and Therapy Department of Psychology

University of California at Los Angeles
(UCLA) 405 Hilgard Avenue,

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563 California,
USA

and is responsible for references 2, 3, 5,
12

Dr Donald Saklofske

Personality and Individual Differences

Department of Psychology University of
Western Ontario Canada

and is responsible for references, 14, 22,
25, 27

Jaan Valsiner (Editor-in-Chief)

Intergrative Psychological and Behavioral Science

Department of Psychology Clark

University

Worcester, MA 01610-1477

and is responsible for reference 4

Professor Oi Ling Siu (Editor)

International Journal of Stress Management

WYL201/1

Dorothy Y L Wong Building Department
of Applied Psychology Lingnan University

Tuen Mun Hong Kong

and is responsible for reference 19

Associate Professor Cory R. Scherer (Editor) Psychological Reports

Department of Psychology Pennsylvania
State University Penn State

and is responsible for references 6, 8, 9,
11, 13, 15, 16 and 17

Professor Emeritus John D Ball (Editor) Perceptual and Motor Skills

Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral
Sciences Eastern Virginia Medical School

Norfolk USA

and is responsible for references 24 and
26

Werner Strik (Editor) Neuropsychobiology

University Hospital of Psychiatry Waldau

CH-3000 Bern 60

Switzerland

and is responsible for reference 7

Adam S. Radomsky (Editor)

**Journal of Behavior Therapy and
Experimental Psychiatry**

L-PY 101-4

Psychology Building 7141 Sherbrooke W.

Concordia University in Montreal Canada

and is responsible for reference 10

**Timothy R Elliott (Editor) Journal of
Clinical Psychology**

Education & Human Development Texas
A&M University

713A Harrington Office Building

and is responsible for references 20 and
21

**Ying Hwa kee & LambrosLazuras (Co
Editors) International Journal of Sport
Psychology**

Edizioni Luigi Pozzi s.r.l. Via Panama 68 -
00198

Roma, Italy

and is responsible for reference 23

