

DEAR SIR,

I am grateful for Dr. Norman Kreitman's thoughtful comments on our paper ("Familial Aspects of Neuroticism and Extraversion" by Coppen, Cowie and Slater). When we discussed, in the paper, the implications of our findings we thought it important to base our observations on statistics that were significant at the generally accepted levels. For this reason we did not think any conclusions could be drawn from the slightly different prevalence rates of mental illness in the relatives of patients as the groups concerned were so small; for example although 17 per cent. of the mothers of neurotic males had had a mental illness this in fact represents only 9 subjects. For the same reason we did not draw conclusions from small differences in correlation coefficients unless they were significant at levels less than 5 per cent. However, what did seem to emerge very clearly was that the mother of a male neurotic consistently and significantly showed positive correlations with her children both for N and E, whereas the mother of a female neurotic did not. In some ways, the correlations for E are more significant; as we have recently shown, E scores are more stable and less liable to be altered by changes in clinical state than are N scores (Coppen and Metcalf, "Effects of a depressive illness on M.P.I. scores", to be published in this Journal.)

The hypotheses we put forward were very tentative and we agree that their confirmation or otherwise must depend on more information about these family relationships, both in normal families and in those families in which there are neurotic patients of either sex.

A. J. COPPEN.

BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

DEAR SIR,

An increasing number of publications report the treatment of such disorders as fetishism by the establishment of a conditioned avoidance response or aversion to the fetish. The urge to publish sometimes permits only brief follow-up after treatment. In a description of a twenty-two year old rubber-mackintosh fetishist treated by apomorphine vomiting and a repetitive tape-recording technique, I reported that he still appeared to be cured twenty-one months after treatment (*J. ment. Sci.*, 1962, 108, 196-212). Since childhood he had had sexual desires strongly linked with women's rubberized mackintoshes, had masturbated regularly while wearing one, and came for treatment because, after marriage, he felt compelled to ask his wife to wear her mackintosh in bed.

Contact with this patient was lost, but recently I encountered him again and it may be of interest to report that fifty-four months after treatment he still regards rubberized mackintoshes with indifference tinged with amusement at his youthful worship of them. His sex life is happy and normal, he and his wife now have two children. His career has prospered so well that he is now a nationally-known figure in a field which cannot here be mentioned on account of possible identification.

It is hoped that other authors will be prompted to report long-term follow-up of cases after similar treatment.

IAN OSWALD.

THE PATIENT'S SPOUSE AND CONCORDANCE ON NEUROTICISM

DEAR SIR,

In his most interesting paper on "The Patient's Spouse" (March 1964, p. 159), Dr. Kreitman reports marked differences between neurotic patients and their spouses on the one hand, and between control subjects and their spouses on the other, for the concordance of scores on the Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI). We have recently (1960-1961) made a household survey of mental health on a random sample of an urban population, in the course of which we administered the short form of the MPI (1) to some 1,850 adults. This has given us an opportunity to examine our figures in the light of Dr. Kreitman's paper and although our data are not strictly comparable with his, they seem sufficiently so to be worth a brief report.

The figures we present are based on scores of the short MPI, given verbally by interviewers to the husband and wife in 429 families (out of a possible 476) where there was at least one child under the age of 16. A person was recorded as neurotic if he admitted to having had "nervous trouble of any kind" during the previous twelve months and if either he had seen his doctor about it who told him it was "nerves" or it had caused him to cut down his activities for at least one day during the previous fortnight. The proportion of neurotics on this test corresponded closely to that diagnosed by general practitioners in the same sample. Among the 429 couples, there were four with both spouses neurotic, twelve with the husband only, and 48 with the wife only.

We did not record the duration of marriage, but instead have used the wife's age as an index of this duration. Clearly there will be a high correlation between a wife's age and the duration of her marriage;