



The peril and the labor lie not in dreadful monsters or in mighty deeds, but in the keeping of the heart a man has won.

—James Thurber in *The White Deer*

## What Kind of People May Feel Too Much?

Big news: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently announced the results of a landmark study of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). Four teams of investigators from various fields independently studied data on 20,000 genes from 326 people and concluded that there is probably a genetic basis to CFS.

Independent researcher Michael Jawer applauds such studies that result in findings that may jog our assumptions about maladies often attributed to hypochondria. Jawer, the author of a new survey called "Environmental Sensitivity: Inquiry into a Possible Link with Apparitional Experience" (*Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 70:882), hopes that the surprising results of his research — a correlation between physical sensitivities (such

as migraine headache, allergies, and CFS) and apparently psychic sensitivities— will jog the perception of psi perceptions.

During the 1990s, Jawer developed guidelines for indoor air quality to combat sick building syndrome. In the course of his investigation, some subjects confided that not only did they suffer from chemical sensitivities, but they claimed that watches, computers, and other electrical equipment often would not work in their presence. Intrigued, Jawer created a survey to find out what kinds of people exhibit these apparent health affects.

So far, 62 self-described "sensitives" and 50 non-sensitive controls have completed a 54-item questionnaire designed to give a composite picture of each one's medical,

emotional, and family history. The results: Sensitives are 3.5 times more likely than the controls to assert they have had an apparitional experiences and 2.5 times more likely to have immediate family affected by physical, mental, or emotional sensitivities similar to their own. And eight of the 54 factors surveyed were found to be statistically significant in the sensitives' makeup: being female, a first-born or an only child, single, ambidextrous, appraising oneself as imaginative, introversion, clearly recalling childhood trauma, and maintaining that one affects or is affected by lights, computers, or other electrical appliances in an unusual way.

"Most people don't want to publicize their sensitivities," says Jawer. "But it's hard to draw attention to their needs, as a group, if they stay anonymous. I see value in finding out how people are put together neurobiologically. For instance, ambidexterity — a marker of sensitivity — suggests that these people may have greater communication between the right and left hemispheres of the brain."

Commenting on the survey, Marc Micozzi, M.D., Ph.D., founding editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, says, "We always want to find some germ. But maybe [the basis for certain maladies] is the way the brain processes stimuli in an environment. There's a new idea embedded here — this apparent connection between certain types of sensitivity and the way the brain processes, and the way the body reacts, which may result in diseases that remain unexplained by mainstream medical science. Surveys such as Jawer's can encourage neurobiological studies and provide a snapshot of the people to be studied."

Hence, let's increase mainstream medicine's sensitivity to sensitive people and fund more studies like the CDC's. To read Jawer's study, go to <http://cogprints.org/4846>.

—Betsy Robinson

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