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Theory + Experimentation = Scientific Progress

It is difficult to compare theoretical and experimental research because they are the two halves of the whole. Without one the other could not exist. Over the last half century, theoretical research has taken a back seat to single-hypothesis studies. In doing so we have been missing many great advances or at least delaying them.

New theories, no matter how credible have difficulty in gaining acceptance because they challenge the current thought and there the forum for publishing and disseminating such theories is limited. It is for this reason that the Journal of Theoretics was created. Theoretical research must be evaluated by the validity of its arguments, its logic of thought, and its basis in credible facts. It must be accepted or rejected on those criteria rather than "p" values and null hypotheses.

Though both Einstein and Edison contributed greatly to mankind, I envision Einstein when I think of theory and Edison when I think of experimentation. Though both theory and experimentation are necessary components of science and research, the emphasis on theory has been losing ground in the current scientific literature. It is therefore the purpose and goal of this journal is to renew the spirit and vigor of theory in scientific research.



Journal of Theoretics, Editor (written 2/1/99)

H. Pylori and Ulcers, a Forgotten Discovery

The association between a certain bacteria and stomach ulcers was discovered over a hundred years ago as Dr. Kidd describes.(1)

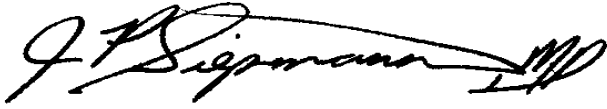
"Indeed, the effects of acid inhibitory agents were held as gospel truth whilst the use of antibiotics or metallic ions were deemed to be quackery or at least ill judged. Nonetheless, spiral-shaped bacteria had been identified in both mucosa and gastric contents of patients as early as 1889. Elegant studies had documented the infectivity of these organisms, and suggested but not proven a causative role in gastric disease."

It was until 1983, when Drs. J. Robin Warren and Barry Marshall, rediscovered this and put forth the theory that bacteria were the cause of stomach ulcers. Even after presenting a convincing discovery, it took over 10 years for the rest of the world to know about it and begin to accept it. It challenged the thought of the time that it was excessive acid that caused ulcers, besides bacteria could not live in the stomach. Dr. Thagard summarizes it as follows.(2)

"In 1983, Dr. J. Robin Warren and Dr. Barry Marshall reported finding a new kind of bacteria in the stomachs of people with gastritis. Warren and Marshall were soon led to the hypothesis that peptic ulcers are generally caused, not by excess acidity or stress, but by a bacterial infection. Initially, this hypothesis was viewed as preposterous, and it is still somewhat controversial.

In 1994, however, a U. S. National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Panel concluded that infection appears to play an important contributory role in the pathogenesis of peptic ulcers, and recommended that antibiotics be used in their treatment. Peptic ulcers are common, affecting up to 10% of the population, and evidence has mounted that many ulcers can be cured by eradicating the bacteria responsible for them."

In fact, Dr. Marshall was so frustrated by the lack of acceptance of his theory, that he drank a beaker of H. pylori and subsequently developed stomach ulcers and a lot of pain. It still did not convince many. I hope that through this journal, a rational evaluation of new theories may be accomplished in a more thoughtful and less painful process than Dr. Marshall endured.



Journal of Theoretics, Editor (written 2/17/99)

1. Kidd M, Modlin IM; *Digestion* 1998;59(1):1-15

2. Paul Thagard, "Discovery and Acceptance,"1997

a story

One cold winter day in 1999, a funny looking gentleman walked into a journal editor's office and presented him with a handwritten scientific paper. The editor laughed at the gall of anyone presenting such a thing and gave it back to the man and said that he could not even review it until it was typewritten. The gentleman did appear to have old and worn clothes (obviously not a very successful man) so the editor was not surprised when the man stated that he did not have a computer, or even a typewriter.

Trying to be generous to this poor creature the editor stated that he would look at his handwritten manuscript if he could at least submit it in the proper format. The gentleman with downward gaze stated that his paper was theoretical and would not lend itself to the journal's format since there was no experimental data.

At this point the editor began to wonder about this man's faculties. How could he have a scientific paper without supportive experimentation or data? He then politely asked the gentleman to leave as he could not even bother looking at such a paper, let alone publish it. The gentleman still gazing downward, slowly turned about and left without a word.

The journal editor then noticed that the man had forgotten his manuscript. He called in his secretary and reminded her that he was only interested in meeting with known researchers who had been previously published in peer reviewed journals and gave her the manuscript in case the man should call back. She left the office with the manuscript and looked for the author's name which she found scrawled at the end. She put it on her desk in case he should call, this A. Einstein.

Anonymous

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email: mail@journaloftheoretics.com

