

Dr. Penfield

Temporal Lobe

September 25th, 1953

Dr. Stanley Cobb,
Massachusetts General Hospital,
Fruit Street,
Boston 14, Mass., U.S.A.

Dear Dr. Cobb:

I understand from Dr. Penfield that you would like to know what psychological tests are now being used as part of the temporal-lobe study. My own test battery has broadened a little since the discussions in Montreal last spring, but in essence it remains the same. I am enclosing a summary of the examination as it now stands and if anything is not clear I shall be glad to let you have further details.

I would like to point out that my work deals primarily with intellectual functions: if you like, I am looking for cognitive rather than emotional disturbances. For this reason no personality tests are included in the battery. As you may remember, the main emphasis is to be on memory and on perceptual disorders of various kinds.

I should add that exactly the same tests are given to a control group of patients with epileptogenic foci outside the temporal lobe, frontal or parietal cortex, so that one can see whether any deficits found are specific to the temporal lobe.

The findings to date are essentially as I described them to you in the spring. First, the patients with temporal-lobe lesions make poorer scores than does the control group on tests involving complex pictures dealing with scenes of everyday life (McGill Picture Anomaly and Wechsler Picture Arrangement).

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This is a very clear-cut result, so I am now trying to find out what it is that makes these particular tests difficult. The second finding is that patients with right temporal-lobe lesions as a group, do worse than those with left-sided lesions on tests of spatial ability, visual and tactual; here the marked individual differences pose a special problem.

It is still too early to say anything about the work on memory. I am adding new tests to the battery, but these are still in an experimental stage. Time perception is, I think, a closely related problem which will require systematic study.

I would be most grateful for any suggestions as to how the present test battery could be improved.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Milner

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BM/GM