the possible unrepresentativeness of Mensa members in sampling people of high IQ, but contend that: "The difficulty of sample selection is removed, however, if comparisons are made not between the sample and the general population, but within the sample between respondents and their relatives". But does this remove the difficulty? Parker² reports that men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses. So perhaps the girls join Mensa? I suggest that people with glasses are more likely to apply to join Mensa than people without glasses.

This is not to deny that there probably is an association between myopia and IQ. Karlsson³ found that children who score highly in IQ tests at the age of 7 or 8 are more likely than others to wear spectacles later in their lives. Of course, this finding still leaves open the possibility that environmental rather than genetic causes are responsible.

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- ¹ Sofaer JA, Emery AEH. Genes for super-intelligence? *J Med Genet* 1981;18:410-3.
- ² Parker D. *The Penguin Dorothy Parker*. London: Penguin, 1977.
- ³ Karlsson JL. Influence of the myopia gene on brain development. *Clin Genet* 1975;8:314-8.

This letter was shown to Dr Sofaer and Professor Emery, who reply as follows:

SIR,

Dr W H James suggests that people with glasses are more likely to apply to join Mensa than people without glasses, and quotes an epigram by Dorothy Parker in his support. But should we take seriously the evidence of Dorothy Parker, well known for her contradictory attitudes towards the opposite sex? In the first two lines of her poem *Men* she observes:

"They hail you as their morning star
Because you are the way you are"¹

presumably specs and all.

In our paper² we made no claim to do any more than provide some evidence in support of previously reported associations of high IQ with gout, myopia, and infantile autism.³⁻⁵ We clearly acknowledged that associations can occur for several reasons and that more detailed work is required before a common genetic basis for any disorder and high IQ can be regarded as proven. Dr James seems ready to accept that such associations do exist, at least for myopia.

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- ¹ Parker D. *The Penguin Dorothy Parker*. London: Penguin, 1977.
- ² Sofaer JA, Emery AEH. Genes for super-intelligence? *J Med Genet* 1981;18:410-3.
- ³ Anonymous. Uric acid and the psyche. *JAMA* 1969;208:1180.
- ⁴ Karlsson JL. Influence of the myopia gene on brain development. *Clin Genet* 1975;8:314-8.
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Genes for super-intelligence?

SIR,

In their article on 'Genes for super-intelligence?' (*J Med Genet* 1981; 18: 410-3) Sofaer and Emery stated that the superior intellectual powers of the higher primates may be to some extent a consequence of high uric acid levels.

This is to let you know that we had the opportunity some time ago to investigate correlations between serum uric acid level and intelligence.¹ We studied 270 children aged 0 to 16 years, including subjects with epilepsy, behaviour problems, and mental deficiency, and exceptionally gifted subjects. The results lend substantial support to the hypothesis that serum uric acid is related to intellectual level in children (mean serum uric acid level in mentally retarded children = 3.98, in exceptionally gifted children = 4.77).

We may add that in our study we decided to investigate a number of children in order to exclude the many variables (stress in adults, eating habits, etc) which could play an important role in the uric acid levels in the adult population. We could find no other published reports of these investigations undertaken in children.

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Reference

- ¹ Burroni M, Cenci L, Cervini C, Zampa AM, Zamponi N. L'uricemia nell'età pediatrica (sue interrelazioni con lo sviluppo mentale). *Clin Dietol* 1981;8:17-39.