

Is your doctor a psychopath?

Psychopath: "A person with a psychopathic personality, which manifests as amoral and antisocial behavior, lack of ability to love or establish meaningful personal relationships, extreme egocentricity, failure to learn from experience, etc."

Psychopaths are often highly intelligent and manipulative.

You can even take an online Psychopathy Quiz (Are you a psychopath? Let's find out . . ."). In case you're wondering, I scored very low on the psychopathy scale.



Certainly, you could make the case that Dr. Farid Fata, who recently received a 175 year sentence, is a psychopath. He is charged with trumping up false cancer diagnoses for 553 patients so that he could bilk insurance companies for unnecessary chemotherapy administration. The lucrative scheme netted him millions of dollars in reimbursements, but left scores of patients with devastating side effects.

Or the orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Spyros Panos, who was found to have performed hundreds of unnecessary operations on unwitting patients, fraudulently billing Medicare for millions.

And these are not isolated incidents of medical abuse.

But there's some new-think about the psychopathic personality, thanks to research by Dr. James Fallon, a neuroscientist. He's the author of a new book, *The Psychopath Inside: A Neuroscientist's Personal Journey into the Dark Side of the Brain*

According to Fallon, not all psychopaths are criminals, serial killers, or murderous dictators. While the prevalence of psychopathy in the general population is around just 1%, it's 25% among incarcerated criminals.

Fallon himself claims to possess a high degree of psychopathic tendencies, although he's never been in trouble with the law and is a successful scientist with intact relationships. It seems that psychopathy, like paranoia, OCD, depression, anxiety, and even autism, exists on a spectrum, from full-blown to just partial expression. Can a person be just "a little bit" psychopathic?

Psychopathic personality traits seem to be an ingredient in the success of many high-functioning professionals. Among CEOs, 4% qualify as psychopaths—four times the number found in the general population. Not surprisingly, lawyers, media (radio/TV)

personalities, and salespeople follow closely behind.

And—there it is—surgeons ranked high in psychopathy. Perhaps a certain “sang froid” is required to boldly and deliberately inflict grievous bodily harm on human bodies—albeit to save lives. (Reassuringly, other doctors and nurses ranked low in psychopathy scores)

At one hospital where I trained, I witnessed what seemed to be an outbreak of psychopathic behavior among prominent, veteran surgeons. First, a department head, faced with the sudden unanticipated hemorrhage (“We hit a bleeder!”) of a patient he was operating on, abruptly threw down his scalpel in disgust and stepped back from the surgical table. With a gloved finger he traced in blood on the green surgical draping the numbers “0-0-7”. “There”, he declared in frustration to the astonished junior surgeons, “That’s your license to kill!” He then tore off his gown and mask and stomped away from the operating table.

Not a week had passed when a surgical physician’s assistant at the same hospital complex was found brutally beaten with a hammer. She survived, but it turned out her assailant was a surgeon who was involved in a love triangle with her.

Then came a rash of obscene phone calls directed to female medical personnel in a different section of the hospital. The mystery was eventually solved when the calls were traced to another, previously non-descript, married surgeon. Regrettably, psychopathic behavior is not the sole province of mainstream doctors.

While it may not meet the criteria of psychopathy, a certain degree of non-conformism and willingness to depart from conventional guidelines is a trait common to many “alternative” practitioners. It certainly requires ego-strength to withstand the criticism of one’s peers; sometimes innovation can flirt with the boundaries of self-delusion.

Psychopathic individuals are often very charismatic—witness Hitler, Ted Bundy, Charles Manson—so it’s easy to see how doctors embodying these traits can attract big, almost fanatical followings.

The case of Dr. James Bradstreet is illustrative. His story was highlighted in a Washington Post article “The Mysterious Death of a Doctor Who Peddled Autism Cures to Thousands”.

While I have admiration for my integrative medical colleagues who tackle the complex problem of autism, and believe they have helped many, I have concerns that Dr. Bradstreet overstepped the bounds of prudence and safety in administering an immune-

enhancing cocktail called GcMAF to kids without proper research confirmation of its benefits. So in thrall was he of his own “scientific breakthroughs” that he brooked no criticism of his methods, and resorted to branding his detractors as tools of the vaccine industry and Big Pharma. He also claimed inordinate success in “curing” autism—over 80% by his reckoning.

Whether that constitutes psychopathic behavior I don’t know, but it does reveal a lack of proper introspection and self-critique. Yet, when the authorities came after him for administering unauthorized and potentially contaminated injections, his world closed in around him, and he was found floating in a river with a gunshot wound to his chest.

With cult-like devotion, his followers have deemed his death a “hit-job” by nefarious forces of the medical orthodoxy, determined to suppress a potential cure for autism. But the evidence points to suicide.

Bottom-line, be a smart and critical consumer, and don’t succumb to the unscrupulous manipulations of any health professional with psychopathic traits, be it a conventional doctor or a medical visionary.

Be alert to the following warning signs of psychopathic behavior in your health provider:

- 1) You frequently get the impression your doctor is dismissive of your concerns*
- 2) He or she is grandiose and continually touts their alleged accomplishments*
- 3) They are always blaming others: “lazy” or “non-compliant” patients, other “incompetent” doctors, the “Establishment”*
- 4) They make “too good to be true,” unrealistic claims (e.g. miracle weight loss, pain relief, cancer cures, etc.)*
- 5) They propose therapies that are unduly risky, dangerous or expensive with little justification for their rationale*

And never **ever** completely abdicate responsibility for your health care by making your doctor the sole arbiter of your course of treatment, however persuasive or confident he or she may seem.

Your life or that of a loved one may depend on it.