

DePaul professor studies effects of chronic fatigue syndrome

By Paul Fine

Copy Editor

DePaul University professor of psychology Leonard Jason has recently finished conducting a study of almost 1,500 nurses in order to obtain new statistics on the prevalence of "chronic fatigue syndrome" (CFS).

Contrary to older studies which place the incidence of the syndrome between 4-40 cases per 100,000 people, Jason found the incidence much higher, at around 320-680 per 100,000 people.

"The reason I'm studying this topic is that three years ago I got mono and I'm still recovering from it," said Jason.

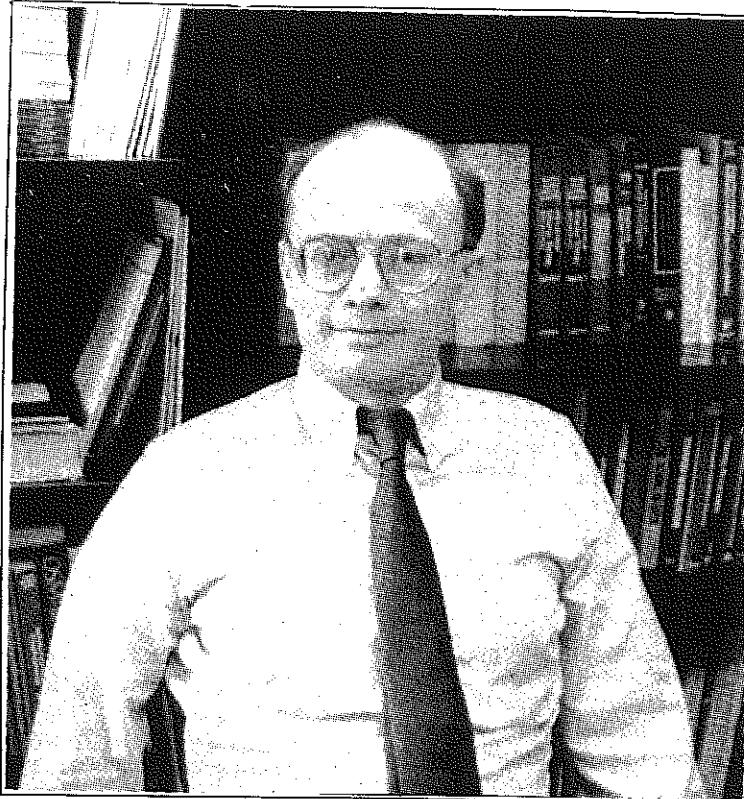
"My health got so bad that I actually had to leave DePaul for a year. Once I finally started getting well, I decided that I wanted to do some research in this area. This is something a lot of undergraduates get and they get worn down. But often, if they don't get well, like what happened to me, sometimes it becomes chronic fatigue syndrome.

"If your immune system becomes sufficiently weakened because of viruses or stress or bad diet, you can end up into a state where you're chronically tired. That is what the syndrome is all about," said Jason.

"When I started getting well, I decided that I wanted to work on trying to find out exactly how many people are sick, and second, I wanted to find out what types of places could be established to allow people to heal.

"About 95% of people get well after contracting a virus, be it mono or the flu. The people that don't, however, can go into a state of prolonged sickness," added Jason.

With regards as to how this all affects students at DePaul, Jason emphasized the need to be in a non-stressed environment, proper eating habits and having a good "coping strategy" to deal with problems.



Leonard James, of the psychology department, recently completed studying chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS).

photo by Becky Carrizales

"At the college level, mononucleosis is very prevalent and this can lead to CFS which can cause a lot of undergraduates to drop out. I've known some students that have suffered for years with this type of CFS," said Jason.

Professor Jason mentioned that people who are constantly pushing themselves and are under heavy stress, which lowers their immune systems, are at especially high risk for developing CFS.

"Warning signs to look for are: if you always manage to catch the cold or flu that happens to be 'going around' and you get it worse than everybody else and it stays on longer. These are all signs that your immune system is shaky. That would be the time to do something corrective, rather than let things get worse like I did."

"Rather than speeding up, people should slow down and relax. People need to listen to their bodies and respond when they feel fatigued," said Jason.

Current treatments for CFS include rest, quiet, anti-viral medications and immune boosting drugs. Other things such as psychological therapy, yoga and herbal treatments are also being tried.

Jason is continuing his work on CFS in an upcoming study. Sponsored by the psychology department, the study will try to track the syndrome in the Chicagoland area.

Volunteers are needed to help make phone calls and perform other duties needed for the study.

Anyone interested in helping should call Leonard Jason at 362-8277.