

ASSESSMENT OF HANDEDNESS

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Humans as bilaterally symmetrical animals very often show anatomical and physiological asymmetry. One of its best known forms is lateral dominance. The commonest methods used in identifying lateral dominance are, (i) performance tests (ii) questionnaire. However, the first method cannot be easily used in a large population whereas the second method has to depend on the quality of the questions.

In the present study an attempt was made to devise a set of simple and reliable tests to assess handedness *i.e.* the dominant upper limb, and to compare the results with those from self assessment by the subjects themselves. The subjects were male ($n=103$) and female ($n=84$) medical and dental students aged 20-25 yrs.

Tests used to find out the hand preference, were (a) tearing a piece of paper (test I) (b) lighting a match (test II) (c) writing (test IV) (d) eating (test V). The rate of voluntary finger tapping was determined for each hand (test III) and finally the subjects were allowed to self-assess themselves (test VI).

When compared to tests I, II and III, tests IV, V and VI show about 5% apparent increase in the prevalence of right handedness. This may be due to the socio-cultural influence of preferred use of the right hand in tests IV and V. Thus, tests IV and V are not as sensitive as tests I, II and III for the assessment of handedness. There is no significant difference between males and females in the proportion of handedness.