

adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on 9 December 1975. These principles are a solid basis for providing support for all human beings who are mistreated.

Amnesty International is the paradigm of an organization which assiduously avoids any political stance other than a support for basic human rights in all circumstances. Let us not hold back; let us take a stand on these principles.

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Computer Testing

In his timely editorial on computerized psychological testing (22 July, p. 323), Joseph Matarazzo criticizes automated test interpretations. However, readers might be left with the impression that he is criticizing any use of computers in giving psychological tests.

Matarazzo writes that a computer-presented test has "a spurious appearance of objectivity and infallibility," as a halo effect from the computer. In fact, the appearance of infallibility is closely related to the appearance of precision of numerical test scores, a problem that predates the computer. Matarazzo expresses concern that results of computerized psychological tests can be harmful in the hands of an unqualified person, such as a college admissions officer, but surely this would not apply to computerized cognitive tests of knowledge, such as the Graduate Record Examination or the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

A paper-and-pencil test does not lose its power when it migrates to a computer. A vocabulary test measures word knowledge just as well on a computer as in a booklet. Further, computer presentation has many benefits. For example, in tests of knowledge and cognitive skills, the computer can adapt the level of difficulty of the question to the apparent level of knowledge of the student. The computer also permits new types of

tests; memory and response speed are but two of the skills more easily assessed by computer than by test booklets.

Matarazzo does not object to presenting personality tests on a computer console rather than in a booklet, or to using the computer to process the responses and provide the customary profile of test scores for inventories such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). Scores from the paper-and-pencil version of the MMPI have demonstrated validity for many purposes, and the scores from the computer version may be presumed to have similar validity.

Narrative interpretations of test scores are another matter. The basis for these interpretations is shrouded in proprietary secrecy and, as Matarazzo states, no evidence has been published in peer-reviewed journals of the validity of any such interpretations. Establishing their validity will not be easy because appropriate methods are not well developed.

Although there is no cause for alarm about computerized testing, much more remains to be learned about automated test interpretations, and here I join Matarazzo in urging caution. Eventually, these interpretations might turn out to be better than those given by the average clinician, but in any case they will be based only on the test responses and must be considered only partially digested information for use by qualified professionals.

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Grain Elevator Safety

As noted in Eliot Marshall's article "Deadlock over explosive dust" (News and Comment, 4 Nov., p. 485), I am counsel for the National Grain and Feed Association in connection with pending proposals of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to regulate grain-handling facilities.

Marshall asserts that the Office of Management and Budget, "[w]ith advice from" me, has held up the OSHA proposal for extended review. As I informed Marshall, my client and I met on one occasion with officials at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and provided them with the same information previously made available to both OSHA and congressional committees. The implication that I could (even assuming I wished to do so) dictate policy



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