

NEW PSYCHO-PHYSIOLOGICAL DISORDER DISCOVERED:

“MARA-PARANOIA”

Dr. Daniel Cumming* has reported the confirmation of the disorder, long suspected and chronicled through anecdotal evidence. Dr. Cumming describes the new disorder as follows:

Mara-Paranoia. A complex psycho-physical manifestation which may take many forms and which may strike at various times, but is typically exhibited by sufferers within about 30 days of a marathon event. There are also related manifestations which could be individually named as half-mara-paranoia, ultra-mara-paranoia and triathlo-paranoia. However, all are clinically identical in origin and within the broad context of the typical physical symptoms. For this reason, all may be described under the single designation of ***mara-paranoia.***

After years of study it has been determined that mental processes in the typical subject presenting with ***mara-paranoia*** tend to become super-sensitive to indications of minor ailments and to even magnify them to debilitating proportion, at least in terms of potential threat to participation in, or completion of the marathon or other similar event. The number of problems or issues that may be presented is apparently directly related to the creativity of the presenting patient.

Symptoms fall into two or more categories and at least two time-frame models. It should be noted that there is no specific time prior to an event prior to which symptoms can categorically be said to not be related to ***mara-paranoia***, but the key marker is that ***if*** the ailment were serious or real, there would not be time to recover prior to the scheduled event. It is for this reason that the early problems described below tend to be of the potentially devastating physical injury sort, while those occurring within days of the event are more along the lines of colds and flu's.

- Type 1 M-P. The greater the time distance from the event, the more likely symptoms will be to include:
 - Muscle soreness in the hamstring, calf etc
 - Joint soreness in knees, hips or even ankles
 - Potential tendon problems as in the Achilles
 - Sudden back pain or soreness
- Type 2 M-P. The closer the event, the more likely symptoms will be of the following sort:
 - Sore throat indicating the onset of a debilitating cold or flu
 - Congestion suggesting pneumonia or such
 - Stomach or intestinal upset

Some individuals of particularly creative minds will combine both Type 1 and 2 symptoms, moving seamlessly from the one form to the other as marathon day nears. Similarly, there is nothing to say that in severe cases, the athlete will actually transition from Type 1 to Type 2 forms of ***M-P*** and may simultaneously exhibit both types and multiple forms of ***M-P***.

Although at some level, some athletes may actually be looking for an excuse not to run the event, in most instances the worst symptom is the panic response that the “problem(s)” will actually prevent participation and/or achievement of a particular goal. This may result in cold sweats, panic based dreams and feelings of dread or fear, in extreme cases leaving the victim unable to defecate, or as is said in medical terminology, “scared shitless”).

Treatment and Cure. At present there is no known treatment prior to the specific event, although a state of calm and adequate training may help. The only known cure for actual cases of ***mara-paranoia*** appears to be the event itself. Normally, in true cases of ***M-P*** all symptoms will disappear at the starting gun, or within the first mile of the event. If symptoms do not disappear or actually worsen, it is safe to assume that the runner is not suffering a classic case of ***mara-paranoia*** and is in fact sick or injured. This is a direct form or proof of the saying “Just because you’re paranoid, it doesn’t mean the whole world isn’t out to get you!”

Variations. As previously noted, the term ***mara-paranoia*** is general and may be applied to such events as ultra marathons, triathlons up to Ironman level, etc. While classic mara-paranoia will involve running based symptomology as it would relate to preventing the athlete from competing, in the triatholo-paranoia variation such things as rotator cuff soreness or pain in the coccyx (it’s not dirty! it means tail-bone) or bike saddle soreness which would respectively limit or prevent swimming or biking, are natural extensions of the same phenomenon where only the running muscles, joints etc are involved.

* Dr. Cumming is a PhD Food Scientist and knows virtually nothing about medicine or psychology, but don’t you think the “Dr.” lends a nice credibility to the whole thing. On the other hand, Dr. Cumming has run a number of marathons and has friends who have run even more. He has personally suffered from ***mara-paranoia*** more than once, so feels he is very qualified to discuss this disturbance.