

ALLERGY, PHILOSOPHY, VITAMINS

THE DESPERATE STRUGGLE FOR CONSISTENCY

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Last week, I received by mail order a new paper by [a researcher](#) who has written about 30 papers so far, mainly about T reg cells and IL-10. She concludes in her most recent publication

A number of studies, both epidemiological and immunological, are converging to suggest a role for Vitamin D in promoting peripheral tolerance through the inhibition of inflammation, and the induction or maintenance of regulatory T cell populations, both IL-10+ and/or Foxp3+ ... A model is therefore emerging whereby Vitamin D sufficiency may be important for the overall maintenance of pulmonary health...

I don't have a problem with the view that human regulatory T cells may protect in some instances against the development of allergic disease; and there may be also in vitro effects of vitamin D on Tregs. Vitamin D treatment may be therefore even a useful companion to steroids BUT the above notion that

a number of studies, both epidemiological and immunological, are converging to suggest a role for Vitamin D in promoting peripheral tolerance.

is clearly wrong – the overview table a distorting mirror of the previous literature and even then it immediately rejects any peripheral tolerance. Without going into further details, it let's me wonder what is leading to such a strange conclusion in particular as the author never did a study of newborn tolerance.

There seems to be only one explanation: It must have to do something with the consistency principle where an initial interpretation is being communicated to others and consecutively held over a long period. Although empirical facts will not justify it, the theory is even expanded to new situations. Even worse, with only minor credibility the theory becomes vir-

ulent to others – like PhD students in the own group – who are themselves blind to see the contradiction.

I found several references for that in Cialdini's Psychology of Persuasion that I was reading recently. The first one is "[Misremembrance of options past](#)"

This study reveals that when remembering past decisions, people engage in choice-supportive memory distortion. When asked to make memory attributions of options' features, participants made source-monitoring errors that supported their decisions. They tended to attribute, both correctly and incorrectly, more positive features to the option they had selected than to its competitor. In addition, they sometimes attributed, both correctly and incorrectly, more negative features to the nonselected option. This pattern of distortion may be beneficial to people's general well-being, reducing regret for options not taken. At the same time, it is problematic for memory accuracy, for accountability, and for learning from past experience.

The second one is "[Discrepancies between explicit and implicit self-concepts: Consequences for information processing](#)"

Individuals with discrepancies among their explicit beliefs often engage in greater elaboration of discrepancy-related information in a presumed attempt to reduce the discrepancy ... This research suggests that individuals might be motivated to examine relevant information as a strategy to minimize the implicit doubt that accompanies an inconsistency between explicit and implicit self-conceptions.

And the third one is "[The Influence of Accessible Attitudes on the Ease and Quality of Decision Making](#)"

In Experiments 2 and 3, subjects who had developed and rehearsed attitudes toward the individual paintings displayed a smaller elevation in diastolic blood pressure while performing this pairwise preference task than control subjects, suggesting that attitudes can ease decision making.

The final question – will the [consistency trap](#) also affect me? Of course...

