

If your face fits you'll stay sharp in old age

By **Kirsteen Paterson**

a strong difference...'

MEN with symmetrical faces are more likely to stay sharp in old age, a study claims.

Scientists have already established a connection between symmetrical faces and health and beauty.

Now psychologists say faces which fold neatly down the middle point to greater powers of intellect and memory in retirement.

However, the same findings were not recorded in women.

The claims come from an Edinburgh University team headed by Dr Lars Penke. The group used results from a 1932 Scottish Mental Survey to measure facial symmetry and related this to the subjects' performance in reasoning and reaction-time tests.

Dr Penke says the results suggest facial features could reflect 'developmental stability' in the male body, giving an insight into the genetic and environmental disturbances which could affect later health.

These include diseases, toxins, nutrition levels and DNA mutations. However, the absence of such a link

in women could be down to sex-specific effects of genetics on ageing.

Or, it could be because women live an average of four years longer than men, suffering an 'especially rapid' mental decline in their final years.

Dr Penke said: 'Previous research suggested that cognitive decline is an aspect of body-wide ageing.

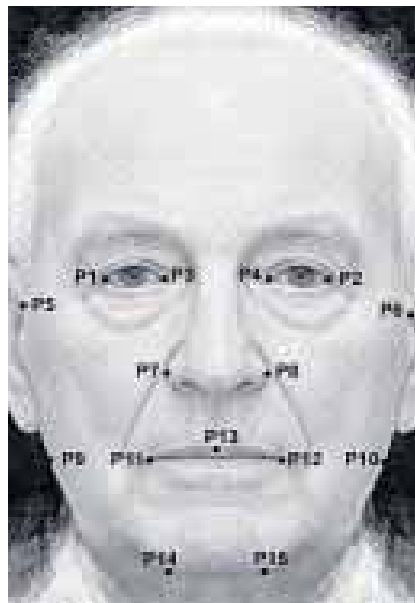
'This link could show that facial symmetry can be used as a marker which could predict this.

'Facial symmetry was measured from individual photographs taken under carefully standardised conditions.

'We measured general cognitive ability, as is assessed in standard IQ or intelligence tests, and the speed of information processing – mostly based on reaction times.

'We actually didn't expect such a strong difference in the effect for men and women.'

'We didn't expect such



The 15 landmarks used to measure facial symmetry

