

MEDICINE

Pentothal Aids Alcoholics

➤ A SUCCESSFUL method of weaning patients away from alcohol who have been driven to drink by emotional or nervous tension was reported by Drs. Frederick Lemere and Paul O'Hollaren of the Shadel Sanitarium for the Treatment of Alcoholism, Seattle, Wash., to the American Medical Association.

With the aid of pentothal, a hypnotic drug, the patient is questioned about the past to find out what caused him to take up drinking. Then, while he is still deep in this hypnotic state, suggestions are made against alcohol and to straighten out faulty thinking habits.

Because this treatment has been given to the most difficult alcoholic patients, conditioning the patient to feel aversion to the sight, smell, taste and thought of alcohol with the drug emetine was found to give better results, the report pointed out.

A three-year follow-up of 479 patients receiving either pentothal, or the hypnotic and the conditioning treatment, showed that 58% of the patients had not returned to alcohol.

Pentothal is very effective in relieving the nervous tension and worry in alcoholics, the doctors said. This is the same effect that patients seek in alcohol. However, the drug made some patients so wild that they were unmanageable and treatment had to be stopped. Others got a craving for more frequent doses of the drug which could usually be controlled.

Treatment usually can be stopped in six to 12 months, the doctors found. A few patients need the drug for as long as two or three years but the physicians feel that it is the lesser of two evils, since it keeps them away from alcohol.

The combined treatment was given patients who had an emotional basis for

drinking, or who had a psychopathic personality, neurosis, psychosis or a criminal record. All patients under 30 were also found to need pentothal in addition to a conditioned aversion to drink. Pentothal alone was given to patients who were not physically fit for the more difficult conditioning treatment, such as those with heart disease.

Science News Letter, June 18, 1949

MEDICINE

Relief for Shaking Palsy Promised by New Drug

➤ EFFECTIVENESS of a new drug in providing relief from some of the disabling symptoms of shaking palsy was announced by Dr. Kendall B. Corbin of the Mayo Clinic to the American Medical Association.

The new spasm-relieving drug, artane, was given to 104 patients. Dr. Corbin noted that it helped to relax the rigidity of their muscles, making them feel more limber and able to move with greater ease. In over half of these patients there was also relief from tremor.

If future trials bear out the present promise of this drug it may challenge the status of the belladonna alkaloids in the treatment of this disease. Dr. Corbin found that it gives symptomatic relief comparable to or greater than that of the belladonna alkaloids.

Eighty patients had some relief from symptoms while getting this treatment and preferred the drug to others because there were less unpleasant reactions to it. Fifteen patients did not get enough help to justify further treatment with artane, while nine

patients either preferred other treatment or were made worse.

Dr. Corbin said that he put some patients back on their former treatment when the effectiveness of artane began to wear off but the patients themselves usually asked to return to the drug.

The unpleasant side effects, noted in 41 patients, were dryness of the mouth, nausea, giddiness, blurring of vision, jitteriness, tightness in the head and soreness of the mouth. Four had severe reactions, including mental confusion, dizziness with nausea and marked agitation.

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