

MEDICINE

Doctors As Drug Addicts

Emotional illness and unhealthy home situations lead doctors, as they do others, to become drug addicts. Demerol is frequently the drug used.

► DOCTORS become drug addicts for much the same reason that other people do. They are emotionally sick, and are the products of a family situation that is unhealthy.

The fact that the needle, syringe and drug are right at hand is only of secondary importance.

These findings from a study of ten physicians who were drug addicts were reported to the U.S. Public Health Service Clinical Society meeting in Washington. The study was made by Dr. James W. Osberg of the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital, Fort Worth, Tex., and the report was read by Dr. Frederick J. Duhl of the hospital.

Some of the doctor-addicts fitted into a "fear of success and independence" pattern. Typical was one 30-year-old married man who was at the top of his class through school and successful in practice. It was during periods of success that he took to drugs.

Of significance to him, because of his need to feel that he was a man, was the fact that his wife had had several miscarriages. This patient, like many others, had a father who was away a great deal so that the patient could not as a boy get close to his father and identify with him. The mother, like most of the other mothers of these doctor-addicts, was so emotional that her children could not talk to her. She was demanding and had to have her son be a success and also had to rule his life. He had no chance to become a man on his own and his unconscious conflict of feelings made him so miserable he took to drugs.

Other of the doctor-addicts fitted a pattern of "I was bored—no excitement." These saw no future for themselves except work in which they found no real satisfaction. They felt inadequate and started taking drugs as an experiment and because of a drive for excitement.

A third pattern is of drug addiction in a doctor who has been sick. He may start taking drugs to control pain or relieve other symptoms.

Significantly, the Fort Worth doctors pointed out, demerol was frequently the addiction drug, although morphine and others were used. The frequent use of demerol was probably due to two things: 1. Early wrong belief that it was non-addicting; 2. Its rapid action in bringing a feeling of well-being.

Of the ten doctors in the study, eight entered the hospital as voluntary patients. Six came because of the insistence of a narcotic agent and two because of pressure from a local medical society. Two were Federal prisoners serving sentences for forg-

ing prescriptions. Some of the voluntary patients had also forged prescriptions.

These doctor-addicts needed, more than anything else, the opportunity to be treated as patients. When they were given this, they were able to use the opportunity and to recover.

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PSYCHOLOGY

The Faster Learner Remembers Longer

► THE CHILD who learns fastest in school also remembers better, Drs. Samuel C. Gregory Jr. and Marion E. Bunch of Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., reported to the Midwestern Psychological Association meeting in St. Louis.

In their experiment, 80 school children between 10 and 14 years old learned which numbers had been assigned to each of 10 geometric drawings. Memory was tested immediately for half the children. The rest were tested after 24 hours.

The difference in speed of learning was statistically significant. In retention, fast learners were superior to slow learners on every count.

It had been previously theorized that the slow learners should retain longer because of the extra drilling in of the material necessary before they mastered it.

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SEISMOLOGY

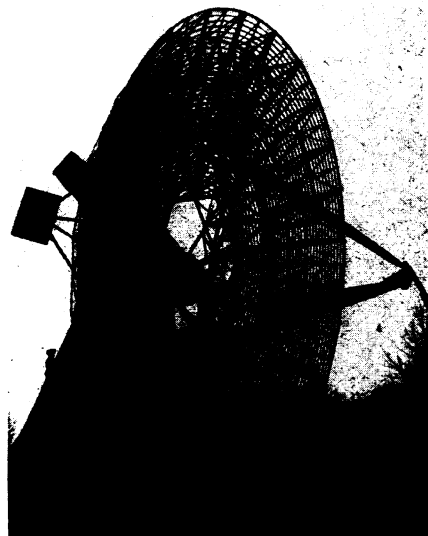
Proposed Highway Jars Lamont Seismographs

► CONSTRUCTION of a highway connecting the New York Thruway with the New Jersey Turnpike will hamper functioning of delicate instruments at the Lamont Geological Observatory if it follows one proposed route along the Hudson River, scientists in Washington said.

Members of the American Geophysical Union have urged the New York State Thruway Commission not to build the highway along one proposed route, which would bring traffic within 1,000 feet of the observatory.

The sensitive seismological equipment, used for recording earthquakes, was once located at Columbia University but subways and street traffic interfered with operation there. Seismologists believe the proposed link would have a similar effect on the instruments at Lamont.

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BIG "DISH"—The 60-foot radio telescope at Harvard College Observatory, recently dedicated, can rotate to focus on any part of sky and can tilt at the same time. Built to collect radio waves from space, the saucer-shaped receiver is largest of its kind in the country.

RADIO ASTRONOMY

Discover Radio Waves From Cluster of Galaxies

► RADIO WAVES have been discovered from a cluster of galaxies for the first time.

The radio communications come from hydrogen atoms in the far-away Coma cluster of 800 to 1,000 galaxies, each of which contains millions of stars.

The signal at a wavelength of about eight and a half inches, picked up by a 24-foot radio telescope at Harvard College Observatory, is very weak, Dr. David S. Heesch told scientists gathered in Cambridge, Mass., to dedicate the 60-foot saucer-shaped receiver.

When the new, 60-foot instrument is tuned in on the Coma cluster of galaxies, he said the cluster's motion away from the earth can be pinned down more exactly.

Dr. Heesch's present measurements show it is flying away from the earth at about 4,000 miles a second, very close to what optical astronomers have estimated.

Dr. Heesch's discovery that hydrogen atoms in the Coma galactic cluster are sending out radio waves marks the third heavenly object beyond the Milky Way galaxy from which radiation at 21 centimeters, or 8.4-inch wavelength, has been detected.

The 21-centimeter radio waves were first discovered almost simultaneously by astronomers in the United States, Australia and the Netherlands in 1951. Their existence was predicted by Dr. H. C. van de Hulst of Leyden Observatory, the Netherlands, in 1944.

Science News Letter, May 12, 1956