

neural activity. A third theory is that these drugs, because of their chemical structure, may be able to pass through natural physiological barriers and penetrate the reaches of the brain.

The more optimistic of the investigators are looking to the drugs to unravel the mystery of mental disturbance. Others, more cautious, fear the drug may hold more perils than promises.

The explanation of how the drugs work has, so far, remained as elusive as the visions they produce.

• Science News Letter, 84:138 Aug. 31, 1963

PUBLIC HEALTH

Program Organized to Improve Nursing Homes

➤ A NATIONAL COUNCIL for the Accreditation of Nursing Homes, jointly sponsored by the American Medical Association and the American Nursing Home Association, has been organized to carry out a nationwide program to promote high standards among nursing homes.

Organization of the new council, including the appointment of a nine-member board of directors, was completed at a meeting of representatives of the AMA and the ANHA in Chicago.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Nursing Homes will be headquartered in Chicago, with a full-time executive director to administer the program.

The number of skilled nursing homes increased from 7,000 in 1954 to 9,700 in 1961, with a total bed capacity increase from 180,000 to 338,700.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Military Psychologists Take on New Roles

➤ MILITARY PSYCHOLOGISTS no longer are concerned mainly with testing the intelligence of troops or printing propaganda leaflets to drop among the enemy. Today they prefer to think of themselves as "human engineers."

"Our job has become much more complex," said Col. Donald C. Almy, one of the Air Force's top psychologists. "We must know as much about the behavior of machines as we do of men."

Col. Almy, who is with the Systems Command Headquarters, Andrews AFB, Washington, was named to head a four-day conference attended by 71 psychologists from ten North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries.

The closed-door conference held in the State Department is the third get-together in the past two years by NATO psychologists. This one was called to thrash out problems of military communications between men and computer-run weapons.

The military human engineers want to make sure that new NATO weapons are not so complex that they become useless to the fighting man who will need them.

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ANTHROPOLOGY

Underworld Borrows Rites from Witchcraft

➤ WITCHCRAFT on a large-scale supposedly died in the 17th century, but underworld syndicate "Cosa Nostra" is reviving some of its practices.

The initiation pact of blood and oath of silence, with which ex-gangster Joseph Valachi recently made headlines, are part of the oldest story in the world.

The mingling of blood, the element which gives life, symbolically stands for brotherhood. History is full of stories about men of opposing races and countries who became "blood brothers" in this way.

A more modern version of blood brotherhood is found in the initiation rites of some college fraternities and other secret societies that still abide by the rites of a blood covenant.

An ancient Egyptian custom required that those wishing to join a secret society open a vein and drip blood into a cup. Members of the society drank from the cup, pledging lifelong allegiance.

The potent, life-giving quality of the blood made it ideal for sacrifice to the gods and holy sacraments. The substitution of wine, symbolizing blood, came later.

The annals of demonology tell of aged crones who practiced witchcraft and required a signature in blood from those who wished to sell their soul to the devil. In return Satan bequeathed knowledge, wealth, fame, revenge on enemies, or anything else that was desired.

The history of voodoo, still widely practiced in Haiti and Africa today, includes a blood pact which in the 18th century won liberation for the slaves and aided the cause of independence for Haiti.

The Bois Caiman ceremony on Aug. 14, 1791, immediately preceded the revolt of the slaves. In a tradition passed down from Dahomey in French West Africa, the slaves joined in drinking the blood of a black pig, sacrificed for the occasion. This ceremony of brotherhood, which was supposed to produce magic powers, eventually led to freedom after a 12-year war.

Thus, when the underworld informer, Joseph Valachi, appears before the Senate Rackets Committee soon, he will be breaking one of the oldest pledges in history—an oath sealed in his own blood.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Women's Personalities Do Not Depend on Age

➤ A MIDDLE-AGED woman may not have the figure of a young lady, but her emotional make-up is essentially the same.

A psychological study of older and young married women shows no significant difference in their personality structures.

This finding is at odds with the theories of psychoanalysis which hold that, at the time of menopause, a woman undergoes emotional as well as physiological changes. At this time, unresolved problems of ado-

lescence return to her mind, and she feels that the world around her is restricting the expression of her impulses.

Because of these added stresses and strains, the theories state, impulse and control systems are less balanced in middle-aged women than in younger women.

Tests on 25 middle-aged and 25 young married women, however, reveal no such differences. Both groups admit they have strong inner urges to control, show a strong grasp over reality and are conventional rather than deviant in their outlook.

This means that impulse, ego and super-ego systems have the same strengths in both groups of women, and that impulses and controls are in balance.

Drs. Jeanne G. Gilbert of Mt. Carmel Guild Guidance Clinic, Newark, N. J., and Raymond F. Levee, St. Vincents Hospital, New York, explain that the emotional changes of menopause, if present, may not appear until later on in life. The average age of the older women studied is 50 years, and average age of the younger is 26 years.

The study was reported in *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 16:773, 1963.

• Science News Letter, 84:139 Aug. 31 1963

PSYCHOLOGY

Adults Often Mistaken In Children's Abilities

➤ GROWN-UPS have strange and stereotyped ideas about the abilities of the normal, average child.

They expect too much of the seven-year-old's mental powers and not enough of the four-year-old's physical coordination.

These are the "remarkable" and "systematic" results of studies on Italian adults reported by Prof. Ezio Pozzo of the University of Rome.

Even adults who are most familiar with young children and who might be expected to know better have these misconceptions. Mothers and school teachers, Prof. Pozzo told a 17th International Congress of Psychology meeting in Washington, D. C., are no more accurate in their judgments of children's abilities than other adults.

Studies of the growth and development of the normal child have shown that the average four-year-old, or preschool, child has many motor skills. He has come a long way from the clumsy, uncoordinated two-year-old, and can climb, jump, tricycle and throw a ball with a great deal of control. He is adept with his hands and fingers. These are the abilities that adults may underestimate.

In overestimating the intellectual capacity of the seven-year-old, adults may expect the child to understand and remember more than he can. They may think the child has insight into a situation when he actually cannot judge what is taking place.

Misconceptions of children's abilities are often buried in the adult's mind, Prof. Pozzo said. Stereotypes may arise from watching the child's behavior and may be maintained by the adult's desires to see the child dependent or independent.

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