

PSYCHIATRY

Computers Aid Doctors

► PSYCHIATRISTS were advised to use electronic computers more widely than at present to share case history information about mental health problems.

This proposal was made by Dr. Bernice T. Eiduson, research director for the Reiss-Davis Clinic for Child Guidance of Los Angeles, who outlined findings of a two-year study before 3,000 members of the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Los Angeles.

Pointing out that clinics and hospitals collect massive amounts of psychiatric information about patients, Dr. Eiduson said these case histories are now of little value beyond a single institution. Researchers into mental illness are confronted with delays and inadequacies in obtaining case material from one institution to another.

Using case histories in the files of Reiss-Davis Clinic, the investigating team developed an event method of punch card processing which enables researchers to obtain complete sets of pertinent information easily and quickly.

The system, Dr. Eiduson said, uses existing procedures and codes in compiling case histories and can incorporate information from many sources. It handles facsimile images of source material, answers almost any question put to it, delivers reports quickly and efficiently and is so devised that changes and additions in equipment usage can be made without causing obsolescence in method or machines.

"And, what is very important to the psychiatrist," Dr. Eiduson emphasized, "this system protects the integrity and privacy in confidential source material."

With records of other clinics and hospitals added to it, the event system of automated information processing could develop into a national psychiatric registry, its material available for large-scale research into mental illness as well as for local applications in patient treatment administration, Dr. Eiduson concluded.

Participating with her in the study were Dr. Rocco L. Motto, director of Reiss-Davis Clinic for Emotionally Disturbed Children, and Dr. Samuel H. Brooks of Aerospace Corporation in San Bernardino, Calif.

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Problem Soldiers Costly

► THE COST to the U.S. Government of problem soldiers is "almost immeasurable," reported Capt. Phil I. Cohen, Valley Forge General Hospital, Phoenixville, Pa.

Capt. Cohen spoke at the American Psychiatric Association meeting.

He reported a study of 360 cases made at Fort Sheridan in Illinois, over an eight-month period last year.

The average problem soldier studied was 19 years old, single, had 10 years of schooling, and enlisted rather than being drafted. Most showed character and behavior disorders, and were in the stockade for being AWOL.

"More than 70% of these problem soldiers committed their first military offense within the first six months of their service," Capt. Cohen pointed out.

"It is estimated that basic training costs roughly \$3,200 per soldier. If a soldier continues to be a problem, then basic training is wasted. In addition, legal costs, costs of maintaining a stockade and costs of Federal Bureau of Investigation pursuit must be included," he said.

"At a minimum, it is estimated that the problem soldiers seen at Fort Sheridan during an eight-month period cost the Government between one million and two million dollars."

Capt. Cohen pointed out that most of the offenders had probably been problem students and problem citizens before their entry into the U.S. Army, and should not have been accepted.

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Engaged Men Prouder

► MEN EXPERIENCE much more self-esteem when they get engaged than do women, a study indicates. But once engaged, women, not men, tend to greatly over-idealize their partners.

Dr. Bruce Sklarew of the George Washington University School of Medicine, Washington, D. C., told of the findings before the American Psychiatric Association meeting.

He studied 25 native-born middle class undergraduate couples who were formally engaged, seriously considering marriage or going steady.

In courtship conflicts, the men maintained considerably more empathy for their partners than did the women, Dr. Sklarew said.

"Thus the males maintained a firm reality orientation toward their partners during the stresses of courtship," he added. "Their heightened self-esteem helped protect them from the need to defensively over-idealize their partners."

"The females with significantly lower self-esteem distorted by convincing themselves of the idealized worth of their partners and were less empathetic in the face of conflict."

Dr. Sklarew's study also indicated that couples composed of older siblings progressed toward marriage, while couples composed of youngest siblings tended to break up.

Dr. Sklarew advised psychiatrists to take a closer look at courtships in order to understand better the problems of adolescence and early adulthood and the emotional conflicts within families.

"Marital conflicts that begin to be structured during the courtship relation mold the familial dynamics that have a decisive influence on personality development," he said.

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Value of Nurse's Uniform

► THE NURSE'S UNIFORM has long been a distinctive garb, but psychiatrists are questioning its value.

And quietly, here and there, some psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists and recreational therapists are changing into mufti.

Dr. Benjamin H. Glover of the University of Wisconsin Medical School outlined the pros and cons of a nurse's uniform to the American Psychiatric Association meeting.

Nurses fear they would lose status and authority not wearing a uniform, he pointed out. Without it, they would have to spend more money to maintain a wardrobe, and some fear the development of a competitive "style show."

On the other hand, when nurses have shifted into mufti, they report higher acceptance as persons. They feel more human and perform better, qualities most desirable in the delicate interactions of the psychiatric nurse-patient relationship.

Dr. Glover said that a study is now underway at the University of Wisconsin Medical School to learn more about the uniform versus mufti situation, and it will be conducted by the school of nursing.

"Mufti offers a challenge to nursing," he said. "Although in itself of little significance, perhaps, it leads in the search to awaken the greater capabilities of the nursing profession to the interrelationships thought to be the core of present-day therapy."

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Hospital Weekend

► PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS can profit from the "weekend hospital" idea, the American Psychiatric Association meeting was told.

The weekend hospital idea is this: patients work at their regular jobs and live with their families Monday through Friday, then spend Saturday and Sunday in a hospital.

The weekend hospital provides two days of intensive treatment, making use of all the facilities of a large mental hospital. Four sessions of group psychotherapy are relieved by periods of hard play in the gymnasium and quiet creative hours in the ceramics shop or library.

Dr. Raymond E. Reinert, Veterans Administration Hospital, Topeka, Kans., Dr. Francis F. Vernallis, Griffin Clinic, Encino, Calif., and Don C. Marler, Veterans Administration Mental Clinic, Topeka, collaborated on the report.

Of a group under study Dr. Reinert said, "two-thirds of the patients were benefited and nearly all viewed the weekend hospital as an exciting, memorable and at least temporarily highly gratifying experience."

Improvements were noted in relations with employers, in job satisfaction and in relationships with wives and children. Greater satisfaction from recreational activities and a greater feeling of ease in groups were also reported.

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