

# Mind Drugs Puzzling

Mind drugs from pep pills to LSD have varying effects on people depending on personality and state of mind—By Patricia McBroom

► THE PUBLIC has gross misconceptions about drugs, from aspirin to LSD, and scientists themselves do not know a great deal more about the mind-acting drugs, a symposium of psychologists was told in New York.

Mind-acting drugs, whether they be pep pills, barbiturates, tranquilizers, hallucinogens like LSD and marijuana, or even aspirin, vary in their effects on people depending on personality and state of mind.

To compound the problem, few studies have been made of the effects of drugs on normal people. Most of what scientists know about the central nervous system (CNS) drugs comes from mental patients, addicts and others abnormal in some way.

LSD highlights the problems characteristic of an entire class of drugs, according to Dr. Edwin H. Elkin of the American Institutes for Research, Washington, D.C., who chaired the symposium held on drugs by the American Psychological Association.

Dr. Elkin told SCIENCE SERVICE that LSD "may very well prove to be one of the most important discoveries of the century" because of its tremendous range of effects on the individual. Yet it is being lumped along with the narcotics and outlawed instead of receiving the kind of attention it deserves.

Marijuana has had the same fate. For 30 years this drug has been treated as narcotic, yet marijuana is not a narcotic nor is it harmful, Dr. Elkin said.

To handle some of the problems presented by drugs affecting the central

nervous system, the American Institutes for Research is engaged in Government-sponsored research designed to create a whole new range of tests that, hopefully, can be used as standards for evaluating drug effects.

Despite the problems, the symposium showed that some firm knowledge is emerging.

Dr. William McGlothlin of the University of Southern California reported that LSD made a slight but measurable personality change for the better in his group of normal graduate students. The tests did not show nearly as much improvement as LSD users often claim, Dr. McGlothlin said.

He pointed out, however, that his subjects were graduate students, who by their nature are committed to a structured program and well defined goals. They might not be as open to change as others. Dr. McGlothlin found that those students with greatest inner control showed the smallest change, and many did not experience much while they were on LSD. Those with more flexible and open personalities were more affected, Dr. McGlothlin said.

LSD seems to be capable of reaching the essence of the personality, if there is such a thing, and exaggerating it, Dr. Elkin said. From this capability comes the drug's reputation as insight producing.

In another report to the psychologists' meeting, Dr. Conan Kornetsky of the Boston University School of Medicine described the effects of a range of CNS drugs on schizophrenic and normal persons. Barbiturates, he found, act the same way on both groups. They lower mental performance, but chlorpromazine, the major tranquilizer used in mental hospitals, improved the performance of schizophrenics while it damaged that of normal people.

Dr. Kornetsky proposed that the barbiturates, as well as the meprobamates (Miltown and Equanil), work on higher intellectual function while chlorpromazine affects arousal and attention. Schizophrenics may be normally so highly active that they can tolerate the action of this potent drug, but normal people cannot.

Dr. Kornetsky also found that amphetamines (pep pills) do not seem to have any effect on schizophrenics in doses that influence normal persons.

The symposium also included Dr. William J. Baker of the American Institutes for Research and Dr. B. Berthold Wolff of New York University School of Medicine.

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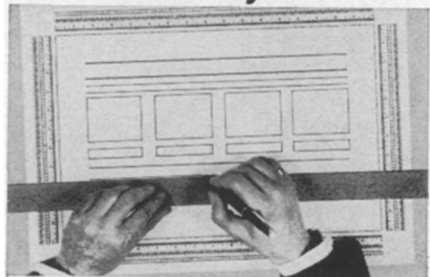
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