

# behavioral sciences

Gathered last week at the 124th annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Washington

## SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY

### The Russian way

Charging patients for psychiatric treatment is anti-therapeutic, immoral, antisocial and beneath the dignity of a health professional. These are the views of a typical Soviet psychiatrist as reported by Mike Gorman, executive director of the National Committee Against Mental Illness in Washington and Isidore Ziferstein of the University of California School of Medicine in Los Angeles.

During a trip to the Soviet Union they found that every Russian psychiatrist considers himself an integral part of the collective community. There is no subspecialty of social or community psychiatry because every psychiatrist works in an over-all social effort as public health officer, early case finder and mental health educator in his district.

Of major importance in the Soviet society is the primary prevention of mental illness. Factors contributing to this are full employment, material security in case of illness or old age, free medical care for all and free higher education. These measures eliminate or reduce social sources of anxiety in the individual.

## PSYCHOTHERAPY

### Encounter group casualties

Last year an APA task force warned that encounter groups could be harmful, but there was insufficient evidence to prove it. Now such evidence is becoming available. Dr. Irvin D. Yalom of the department of psychiatry at the Stanford University Medical School conducted a study that included 18 different groups and 204 patients. Of the 169 members (all Stanford undergraduates) who attended the entire group experience, 17 suffered significant psychological damage as a direct result of their group experience.

Dr. Yalom's findings showed that almost half of the casualties developed in groups with personally intrusive, charismatic or authoritarian type leaders.

## VIOLENCE

### Lonesome cowboy

The veritable orgy of violence seen in TV and movie Westerns is not history but myth. For example, Wyatt Earp cleaned up Dodge City by enacting the country's first gun control law. In his autobiography he states that he only shot one man and was never wounded in a gun battle.

Using film clips of old movies, Dr. Kent E. Robinson of the Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital in Towson, Md., explained the acceptance and popularity of these legends and how they affect contemporary American methods for dealing with violence.

The stereotyped "good guy" theme is the prototype of the child's Oedipus struggle. The hero is the embodiment of the post-Oedipal superego and the villain is the father figure, always plotting against the hero. In this eternal battle good violence is always used to con-

trol bad violence. Thus, campus and ghetto violence are supposedly controlled by the police or National Guard and drug abuse is controlled by more and stricter law enforcement.

John W. Macy, president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, D.C., agreed with Dr. Robinson. He said that the average American family sees almost six hours of television every day. By diversifying the viewing he hopes to lessen the impact of cow-boy violence.

## HUMAN SEXUALITY

### Pornography and sex deviates

The use or misuse of erotic or pornographic material has been linked to undesirable sexual behavior by advocates of suppression of such material. These charges are unfounded, say Dr. Richard Green, professor of psychiatry at the University of California School of Medicine in Los Angeles, Dr. Michael J. Goldstein of the University of California at Los Angeles and Harold Kant of the Legal and Behavioral Institute in Los Angeles.

In a structured interview with 37 male homosexuals, 13 male-to-female transsexuals and 53 male heterosexuals the opposite findings were reported. Homosexuals and transsexuals both reported far less adolescent exposure to erotic movies, photographs and books than did the heterosexuals. Homosexuals also reported less nudity in the childhood home and less sex information from their fathers than from their mothers. Transsexuals learned more about sex from their sisters.

Discussion on these findings pointed out that the evidence does not support contention that pornography is beneficial or necessary to normal heterosexual development. However, the harmfulness of erotica has not been demonstrated and, the discussants felt, it seems an irrational waste of time and money to attempt to legislate against such material.

## SEXUAL AGING

### Sex in middle life

Kinsey, Masters and Johnson and others have reported on the phenomenon of sexual activity among the aged. A new study reports that this activity is not unusual and that it is related to prior sexual experience and enjoyment.

Drs. Eric Pfeiffer and Adriaan Verwoerd, professors of psychiatry, and Glenn C. Davis, a medical student, all at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C., have completed a study on sexual activity in 502 men and women between the ages of 45 and 69.

Dramatic differences between men and women of like age were observed. Only 12 percent of the men and 44 percent of the women reported that they no longer had sexual relations. The study also pointed out that the women overwhelmingly attribute sexual decline to their husbands and the men generally agree, holding themselves responsible for stopping.