BEHAVIOR

Group therapy for cancer patients

Patients with advanced cancer who attend group therapy report improved communication with their doctors, solve some accompanying marital problems and are less likely to deny the seriousness of their illness. Stanford University psychiatrists David Spiegel and Irvin D. Yalom report these findings in the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY (Vol. 28, No. 2). At first, some physicians were reluctant to refer patients to the program, the authors found, for fear that such open discussion of death and dying would unsettle them. But after seeing the effects of the group, many physicians are now referring their patients for group therapy.

"Many patients found new meaning in their lives in the sense that how they lived the remainder of their lives became important and how they died came to seem insignificant," Spiegel and Yalom conclude. "They were able to plan and live with an enhanced sense of meaning and dignity .... Much can be learned from such groups for the everyday therapy of the living."

Reassessing hyperactivity

Despite reports that as many as 20 percent of school children are hyperactive and attend classes heavily drugged, a University of California at Berkeley researcher has found that the problem is really quite rare. Education professor Nadine Lambert has sampled 5,000 children in diverse urban and suburban situations over five years and concludes that less than one percent are hyperactive and only half of these are receiving drug therapy.

With co-workers Jonathan Sandoval and Dana Sassone, Lambert found that among children who do show true hyperactivity, boys outnumber girls by a ratio of six to one. Also, the condition does not seem to be permanent. Peak crisis periods occur at around age five, when children first enter school, and again at eight, when they are faced with demands to work independently.

Education: A change of assumptions

With a burst of optimism and good intentions, the federal government committed itself to a "decade of reform" in education with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The decade ended with declining student aptitude scores, increased racial unrest in the schools and almost universal charges of government insensitivity to local conditions or needs. A postmortem on the decade of effort, prepared for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare by the Rand Corp., suggests that fundamentally different assumptions are needed if federal funding of educational reform is ever to be successful.

The study cites three assumptions of the original program as particularly inappropriate: that radically new curricula, teaching practices and school management procedures are required to improve education; that federal government funding is needed to fill resource gaps of local school systems; and that the most efficient way to use federal funds is through widely adopted, specifically targeted demonstration projects.

The problem with such assumptions, concludes the report, is that prepackaged projects are hard to adapt to local conditions and that they create a demand for staff development which is seldom met by local authorities.

To be successful, future federal programs should concentrate more on helping local school districts create their *own* reform programs, recommends the report. Staff development must be emphasized, innovative programs must be supported throughout the implementation process, and demonstration projects should be "system focused," not targeted at nationwide adoption of a specific reform.

SCIENCE & SOCIETY

Foundation to transfer technology

Now, slightly less than a year away, the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development is drawing increasing attention. The September LUND LETTER (notes on the conference by the University of Lund in Sweden) estimates that 10,000 people in 150 countries are working on its preparation. Here one of the more tangible preparations is creation of a Foundation for International Cooperation, according to Frank Press, the President's science advisor, at an engineering conference in Virginia last week.

Recently, lesser developed countries have become increasingly vocal in their requests that the world's more developed nations provide them aid and technologies to speed their industrial and economic development. The foundation proposes to help not only the poorest nations, but also "middle tier" countries like Mexico, Korea, Iran and Brazil which previously have been exempt from most U.S. aid due to their rising economic stature. Initial funding for the foundation will be about $50 million, according to the Washington Post.

Chinese exchange begins

Following his return from the People's Republic of China last July, presidential science advisor Frank Press told reporters that China's recently announced crash program of scientific and technological development (SN: 6/3/78, p. 358) will include the exchange of students between China and Western nations. Press stressed that China vowed to pay its own way, including the tuition and living expenses of its students. Last month in a report from Peking, the Chronicle of Higher Education announced that China intends to send more than 10,000 students overseas within the next two years at a cost that could exceed $50 million annually. Already Chinese officials have asked Japan, Britain, France, West Germany, Australia, Canada, Romania and Yugoslavia to take 500 students each as soon as possible.

In August, a group of U.S. university presidents met in Washington to plan their role in future exchanges. The Chronicle reports that the participants anticipate the arrival of several hundred Chinese here by early 1979. But last week Stanford University announced it has initiated what it believes is the first institutional exchange with Peking. Six scientists, aged 36 to 44, will arrive next month for a year or two of advanced studies in science and engineering fields. A second, larger group will arrive by January. In return, Stanford scholars will depart for Chinese-language and social-science studies next year. Several Stanford faculty delegations in science and social science fields also plan visits to the Chinese mainland in 1979. The Stanford-Peking exchange agreement, initiated prior to Press's latest Chinese visit, was completed in Peking this month.

Science and technology policy center

A Center for Science and Technology Policy has just been established by New York University's graduate school of public administration. One of its major goals will be to stimulate broader cooperation between government, industry and academia while furthering an understanding of the role each sector plays in the application of science and technology policy to U.S. economic growth, trade and foreign policy. The center will attempt to formulate guidelines for federal policies in these areas while building a "corps of experts" to transfer ideas and information between the sectors. In addition to its teaching functions, the center will sponsor research, seminars and conferences. Internationally, it hopes to become a forum for the exchange of information between industrialized nations, the Soviet bloc and developing nations.