In psychotherapy, Y-A-V-I-S spells success

It is difficult to "measure" the effectiveness of psychotherapy because of the large number of variables involved in each individual case — who is the patient, how severe are the symptoms, how do the patient and therapist interact, etc. Yet, with the question arising of which types of therapy will be covered under a national health insurance plan, procedures and outcomes of various therapies are coming under increasing scrutiny.

At a recent meeting in Hartford, Conn., of the Eastern Psychological Association, two separate pieces of research examined the types of "clients" selected by therapists and the improvement of a group of patients in a private practice psychotherapeutic setting. Previous work has shown that some therapists prefer the client who is young, attractive, verbal, intelligent and successful — the YAVIS. Other research in general indicates that the preferred client is accepting of treatment, spontaneous, not overly disturbed, a good candidate for long-term psychotherapy and of good prognosis, according to Georgiana Shick Tryon and Anthony J. DeVito of Fordham University.

In their study of client selection, the researchers measured the preferences of four male and six female doctoral candidates in clinical psychology regarding 24 therapy patients. The results, measured through several rating scales, show that "raters of both sexes saw female clients as significantly more disturbed [and]...more in need of long term therapy than male clients," the researchers report. These findings are consistent with reports from as early as 1937 that women college students are seen as more maladjusted than are men. Tryon and DeVito speculate that the reasons for this may be a combination of stereotype and actual disturbance from the frustration of beginning their competition in a male-oriented world.

The main finding of the study, however involved therapist preference on the basis of the client's sex. While female therapists showed no apparent preference for any specific type of female clients, they exhibited definite preferences for males who were physically attractive, verbal, intelligent and successful — in short, the YAVIS. Similarly, male therapists had no preferences for male clients with particular characteristics but "preferred their female clients to be short-term, less disturbed and have a good prognosis. This finding indicates that males, like females, were more comfortable doing therapy with same sex clients."

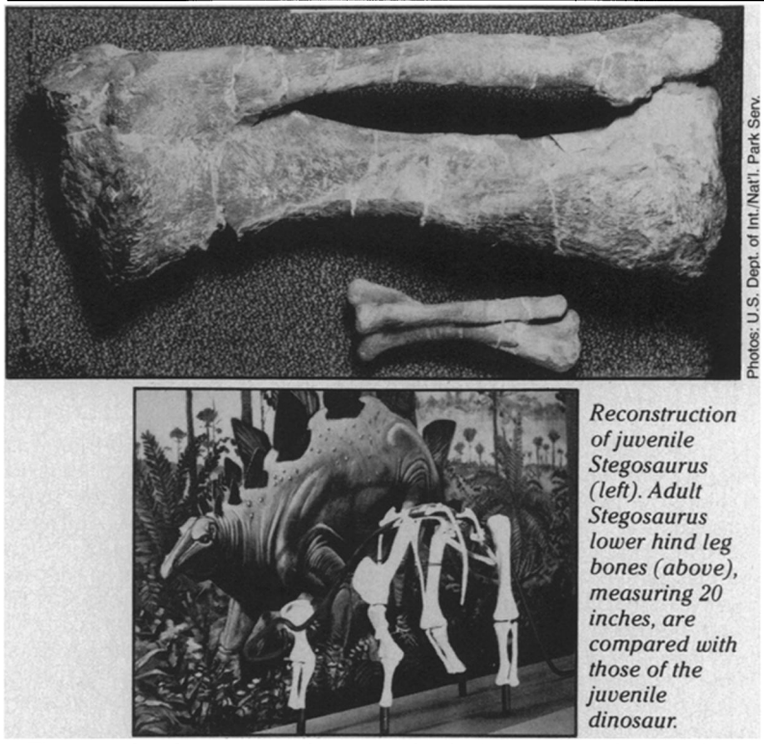
Once the client is in therapy, how much help does he or she derive? A study by psychologists Kathryn A. Kirkhart, Mary P. Koss and John R. Graham of Kent State University and Robert O. Kirkhart of Kirkhart Psychologists, Inc. found the results of therapy to be quite variable. Data were collected on 33 "mild to moderately disturbed" persons prior to therapy and again four months later. Ratings on several psychological instruments were performed by the clients themselves, the therapist and an independent psychologist-rater.

Among the clients, 55 percent reported improvement in overall symptom severity, 10 percent said there was deterioration and 35 percent reported no change. Among the therapists, the corresponding ratings were 66 percent, 8 percent and 26 percent. And the independent raters reported figures of 56 percent, 14 percent and 30 percent.

In rating their "target symptoms" — three of the individual's most prominent symptoms (such as anxiety, depression, problems in relationships and self-image difficulties)—71 percent of the clients reported improvement and 12 percent deterioration; 61 percent of the therapists saw improvement and 6 percent deterioration; 63 percent of the raters detected improvement and 14 percent deterioration.

"At the end of four months, private practice clients generally showed significant improvement in target symptoms and life adjustment," say the researchers. They also note that raters often judged the patients' conditions as more disturbed than did the patients themselves. Finally, the researchers emphasize that while many of the results may have been positive, "in the investigation it was learned that clients who obtain psychotherapy in a private practice setting were only mildly to moderately disturbed and had many personal resources." □

The smallest Stegosaurus



Photos: U.S. Dept. of Int./Nat'l. Park Serv.

Reconstruction of juvenile Stegosaurus (left). Adult Stegosaurus lower hind leg bones (above), measuring 20 inches, are compared with those of the juvenile dinosaur.

These random bones, recently mounted at the Dinosaur National Monument in Jensen, Utah, represent the smallest Stegosaurus discovered to date. According to park paleontologist Daniel Chure, such juveniles are rare—this is one of two known infant Stegosauruses — and their lack hampers studies of dinosaur growth. The Utah specimen, says Chure, is about 50 percent smaller and much more complete than the other specimen, which was discovered in Wyoming in the late 1800s and is now at Yale University.

The 160-million-year-old creatures made their nests in high upland areas, according to Peter Galton of the University of Bridgeport in Bridgeport, Conn., so that few infants were preserved in the stream beds that provide most bone finds. The specimen will be quite valuable in determining a Stegosaurus "growth curve," says Galton, who plans to study the Utah and Yale infants, but will be of little aid in studying dinosaur family behavior because the juvenile's bones were mixed with those of many adult animals. The animal may have been less than a year old.

Chure estimates that the Utah juvenile was about the size of an adult collie and weighed 75 to 100 pounds, while mature Stegosauruses grew to 24 feet long and weighed about 4,000 pounds. It was uncovered in 1965, says Chure, but displayed on the face of the quarry until its growing scientific value prompted its removal for study and mounting. □

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