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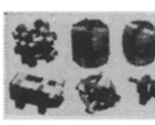
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PUBLIC HEALTH

LSD Helps Alcoholics

➤ LSD, the hallucinogenic drug, is finding use in the cure of alcoholics and for relief of patients dying of incurable diseases.

At an LSD conference at the University of California, scholars and research scientists met to report and discuss the merits and drawbacks of this much disputed drug recently limited in its use by Federal and state legislation.

Proper LSD therapy can convert a large number of alcoholics into sober members of society quickly and economically, said Dr. Abraham Hoffer, associate professor of research psychiatry at the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine. Studies by many researchers indicate that one hospital bed, which with standard treatment of alcoholics can take care of four to six patients a year, can easily accommodate up to 36 patients per year with LSD therapy.

With conventional therapy, Dr. Hoffer said, only about 10% of severe alcoholics treated are expected to be helped, whereas about 50% of some 700 cases treated with LSD since 1953 were much improved or continually sober.

Follow-up studies of a sample of 308 patients for up to 36 months, in treatment given by nine independent researchers, revealed that 145 patients were greatly improved, 44 were somewhat improved and 80 showed no change. Dr. Hoffer said that from the very beginning LSD was used not as a form of chemotherapy but rather as a kind of psychotherapy, made possible by the nature of the experience.

In another role, LSD was given to 80 patients with incurable cancers in an attempt to increase communication with the outside world in order to lessen their suffering and isolation. Dr. Eric Kast, of the Chicago Medical School, department of medicine and psychiatry, sent his report to the meeting to be discussed by an authority on LSD therapy, Dr. Sidney Cohen, associate clinical professor of medicine at UCLA and chief of the psychiatric service, Wadsworth Veterans Administration Hospital, Los Angeles.

Dr. Kast reported that actual physical pain was reduced considerably in these patients. He also reported that 72 of the patients gained a greater insight and lucidity of mind, thus increasing communication among the patients, as well as between the patients and hospital personnel and families.

This, in turn, helped to raise the morale and self-respect of the patients.

Only eight patients (or 10%) did not wish to repeat the experience, as compared to 33% in a previous study. Dr. Kast explained that in most of the patients the actual experience of the drug was terminated at from six to 10 hours after its ingestion by chlorpromazine.

Only 10 patients were able to tolerate the experience for more than 10 hours.

• Science News, 90:22 July 9, 1966

SOCIOLOGY

LSD May Become Legal If It Gets 'Religion'

➤ LSD may well become respectable or at least legal if, like peyote, it is institutionalized, a California anthropologist said in San Francisco. Peyote, a hallucinogenic drug containing mescaline, is used in the religious rites of the Native American Church, or the American Indian peyote cult.

Founded in 1885 by Oklahoma Indians, the church has legal sanction and several white chapters. It drew many of its ethical, spiritual and organizational concepts from the Christian church, said Dr. Michael J. Harner, assistant director of the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley.

For instance, peyote is taken as a sacrament for spiritual power and knowledge.

Dr. Harner told SCIENCE SERVICE that he does not believe present legislation will stop the use of LSD, although he does endorse social controls on the drug.

Today LSD is suppressed, he said, because authorities assume it belongs in the same category as the habit-forming narcotics, such as morphine.

Dr. Harner made his comments at a University Extension conference on LSD.

• Science News, 90:22 July 9, 1966

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