

behavioral sciences notes

SLEEP

Early Awakenings Have Ill Effects

Sleep disturbances in the early morning are followed by a downswing in emotional health. And if the early morning awakenings continue past one or two nights, the ill effects last several days after full nights of sleep.

These conclusions are drawn from a Yale University study of 99 psychiatric patients at the Yale-New Haven Medical Center.

The Yale team traced the patients' sleep patterns over nine weeks after first determining their normal habits and found that neither difficulty in falling asleep nor nighttime awakenings had much effect on emotional symptoms.

By contrast, awakening early for two or more mornings—at 6 a.m. rather than an hour or so later—was followed by an aggravation in the patients' psychiatric condition—particularly in regard to depression and confusion.

A sleep disturbance on one night does no harm and in fact the patients actually improved slightly afterwards.

Drs. David J. Kupfer, Thomas Detre and Martin Harrow suggest in the December issue of *GENERAL PSYCHIATRY* that the relationship between sleep patterns and symptoms is a complex one, and that continued study should reveal clues to underlying pathology.

EDUCATION

Women Shun Doctorates

Despite encouragement, women are not going for doctorate degrees, a report from the National Academy of Sciences concludes.

The percentage of women among Ph.D. recipients today is the same as in 1960—11 percent. In 1920, the percentage was 15 percent. It dropped to a low of 9 percent in 1950.

"These data indicate," says the NAS report, "that the efforts since World War II to interest larger percentages of able women in continuing their education to the doctorate, and especially to consider careers in the physical sciences, have had little effect."

Women, however, are getting more and more B.A. degrees. They now receive 40 percent of all B.A. degrees granted and the figure is rising.

MEMORY

Memory Drug Only Stimulant

The so-called memory pill is no more than a stimulant, Indiana University psychologists report.

Rather than enhancing memory, magnesium pemoline acts like an amphetamine and stimulates the nervous system, says Dr. Roger P. Maickel, a psycho-pharmacologist who led the Indiana investigation.

Widely hailed as a memory-improving drug, pemoline—tradenamed Cylert by Abbott Laboratories—has been the focus of several independent studies since it was first publicized two years ago. But the evidence has never convinced skeptics that pemoline actually makes people smarter, instead of simply excited.

The Indiana team now says that rats given the drug, simply work faster (to avoid electric shock), but do not

learn better. A second drug, paragyline, which increases the effect of amphetamines (pep pills) also increases the effect of pemoline, say the researchers.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Half the U.S. Population Insured

Half the U.S. population—100 million people—have health insurance with some mental illness benefits. One in every four patients seen by private psychiatrists has health insurance covering part of the fee, according to a joint survey sponsored by the American Psychiatric Association and the National Institute of Mental Health.

In hospitals an average of 61 percent of the psychiatric patients have insurance coverage, and the insurance covers, on the average, 64 percent of hospital costs.

Despite these major increases in coverage, however, insurance policies still restrict benefits on mental illness in contrast to other illnesses. Common restrictions are on days of treatment or dollars per year.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Money Troubles Make People Sick

Any downward trend in the economy means an increase in mental illness as reflected by hospital admissions.

Yale sociologist Dr. M. Harvey Brenner found the correlation after an extensive study of New York economic fluctuations and hospital admissions. Dr. Brenner studied a 50-year period in New York from 1910 to 1960.

Any slackening of economic activity, no matter how slight, says the sociologist, is mirrored by increased hospital admissions for mental illness within a year.

He believes the mental illness is due not to unemployment but to financial troubles among the employed, since middle and upper classes are most affected by fluctuations in the economy. These groups react in near perfect accord with the fluctuations, says Dr. Brenner. But lower classes, the very young and very old do not.

New York hospitals admitted some 20,000 mental patients in 1960, and Dr. Brenner suggests that at least 60 percent to 70 percent of these were directly affected by economic stress.

Mental symptoms included all the major psychoses, but manic-depressive psychosis seemed to stand out as the most sensitive reactor to the economy, says Dr. Brenner.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Vitamin Therapy Under Study

The National Institute of Mental Health has decided to test claims that massive, continuous doses of nicotinic acid (vitamin B3) relieves and even cures the symptoms of schizophrenia.

A grant of \$517,000 will go to New Jersey State Hospital and Rutgers University for a four-year evaluation of this controversial vitamin therapy.

Nicotinic acid therapy is being promoted by members of the new American Schizophrenia Foundation who claimed in October that 80 percent of 1,500 patients have recovered on the regimen.