

behavioral sciences

SUICIDE

Death by newspaper

Prof. Jerome A. Motto of the University of California School of Medicine at San Francisco has suggested that newspapers may be a causal factor in suicide. Speaking at the fifth International Conference for Suicide Prevention held in London last month, Prof. Motto reported that the suicide rate in the Detroit area dropped 20 percent below normal between November 1967 and August 1968, during which time no newspapers appeared in Detroit, as the result of a strike. The suicide rate for women in particular dropped by 50 percent, to three per 100,000, during the newspaper blackout.

Prof. Motto blamed newspapers for their "constant emphasis on violence, aggression, sexuality, power and notoriety."

SOCIOLOGY

Contraceptives for adolescents

Physicians should not refuse contraceptives to teenagers simply because the patients lack parental consent, two members of the psychology and family planning departments of the University of Washington insist. Teenagers are more liable to behave responsibly in their sexual behavior if society gives them a chance to assume such responsibility, say Drs. Nathaniel Wagner and Ronald Pion in the October *POSTGRADUATE MEDICINE*.

Drs. Wagner and Pion also note that there has not been a single instance of legal action being brought against a physician who prescribed contraceptives to a minor without parental consent.

PSYCHIATRY

Drug effect on brain waves

Scientists at New York Medical College have launched a program to study the effects of drugs by analyzing brain wave patterns with the help of a computer. Drs. Max Fink and Donald Shapiro are recording the brain wave effects in patients given drugs used in the treatment of mental illness and drug addiction. They then analyze the electroencephalogram patterns by computer.

"Once we can determine the characteristic electroencephalogram signature of the drugs useful in treatment, we feel we may be able to predict their clinical use with greater accuracy," says Dr. Fink.

Brain wave patterns have previously been used as indicators of emotional states and the stages of sleep. In earlier research, without the aid of a computer, scientists were often obliged to classify more than 1,000 brain wave patterns from a single patient by hand.

Ultimately, Drs. Fink and Shapiro hope to find "the best ways of altering a patient's brain functions for therapeutic ends." The experimenters so far have classified more than 60 drugs, including tranquilizers used in treating psychiatric patients and anti-opiates used to cure drug addiction.

The electroencephalogram patterns produced by the drugs can be correlated with behavioral states such as anxiety, fantasy, anger and euphoria.

FAMILY PLANNING

More counsel needed

Of the 5.36 million low-income women in this country who are in need of subsidized family planning services, less than 15 percent are reached by current programs, a study released by the Office of Economic Opportunity shows.

Only 1,200 of the 3,072 counties in the United States have any organized family planning services whatsoever. Poor women desire about the same number of children as other women, the report states, but because they lack access to planning services, some 450,000 unwanted children are born to the poor each year.

In a message to Congress in July (SN: 7/26, p. 82) President Nixon said he hoped to establish "as a national goal, the provision of adequate family planning services within the next five years to all those who want them but cannot afford them."

ARCHAEOLOGY

More riches for Croesus

The Harvard-Cornell expedition to Sardis, Turkey, which last summer discovered the remains of King Croesus' gold workshop (SN: 9/26/68, p. 422), returned to the site this summer and unearthed a new quarter of the city. The findings indicate that the ancient capital of Lydia was even larger and wealthier than previously believed.

This summer's findings, which include several new ore-refining sites, suggest that the city may have contained as many as 50,000 inhabitants and was capable of producing several hundred ounces of gold per week during the 6th century, B.C., when Lydia was the richest nation in the world.

The new area of the city was found by accident when a small boy came across a mound of pottery in a dry stream bed some 50 yards from the expedition's camp.

Among the other findings of the expedition headed by George M. A. Haufmann of Harvard, were a pair of gold ornaments, thought to be earplugs, and a mausoleum believed to be that of a Persian satrap whose empire overran Lydia in 547 B.C.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Protest as therapy

For the poor and the disadvantaged, social protest may be a better means of alleviating mental health problems than traditional psychotherapy, claims Dr. Reuben Bitensky of the Syracuse University School of Social Work.

A therapist working in an office can help a poor patient improve his self-image to a certain extent, but Dr. Bitensky reports in the October *MENTAL HYGIENE*, the patient still has to live in a world of "crisis, rejection and lack of opportunity." Effective protest is therefore not only a healthy response to a brutal and degrading environment, but a way for the patient to resolve personal problems by learning to work with others in social action programs and by a "constructive release of internalized rage."