

MEDICINE

Mental Causes for Ills

Psychotherapy recommended for large number of medical patients suffering from organic disturbances caused by emotional strain.

► TO THE VERY large number of persons throughout the nation who are suffering from mental disorder and need psychiatric treatment must be added many more whose heart trouble, stomach trouble and even rheumatism result from upset and conflicting feelings and thoughts, it appears from discussions at the meeting of the American Society for Research in Psychosomatic Problems in New York.

These people, who may make up as many as half the patients diagnosed as having heart disease or other organic disease, also need psychotherapy, as hundreds of doctors found while serving as medical officers during the war.

Some idea of the size of the problem can be gained from figures reported by Brig. Gen. William C. Menninger.

In 11 Army general hospitals in the zone of the interior a survey by specialists in internal medicine showed that 24.2% of the patients in wards for heart and blood vessel disease and 20.7% of the patients in wards for stomach and intestinal disease had what doctors call functional disorders. This means there is nothing wrong with the heart or other organ but it is not working properly because of the upset emotions.

At station hospitals, almost half, 41%, of the heart patients and 30% of the stomach and intestinal disease patients belonged in this group who had functional disorders.

The figures would have been even higher, Gen. Menninger said, if the surveys had been made by or with a psychiatrist.

The types of organic diseases from which these men suffered are no different, he said, from those in civilian life.

"It is intriguing to speculate," he said, "why so many physicians are blind to the emotional factors in disease."

Medical education is not entirely to blame, he added.

Telling the general practitioner that all these patients must be sent to psychiatrists will not help solve the problem, Dr. Roy Grinker, of Chicago, said. It will only alienate the doctors who are not

psychiatrists and there are not enough of the latter to handle all the patients anyway.

The need is for some method by which the general practitioner can himself treat the emotional problems of these patients, although he will have to give them more than one brief interview a week.

He reported success with a method of "brief psychotherapy," although he pointed out that it is not really brief, merely briefer than the usual methods. It consists in giving the patient a drug, sodium pentothal. Under its influence the patient will speak more freely than otherwise and the psychiatrist can learn more quickly the underlying emotional disturbance. Treatment may be reduced from months to weeks.

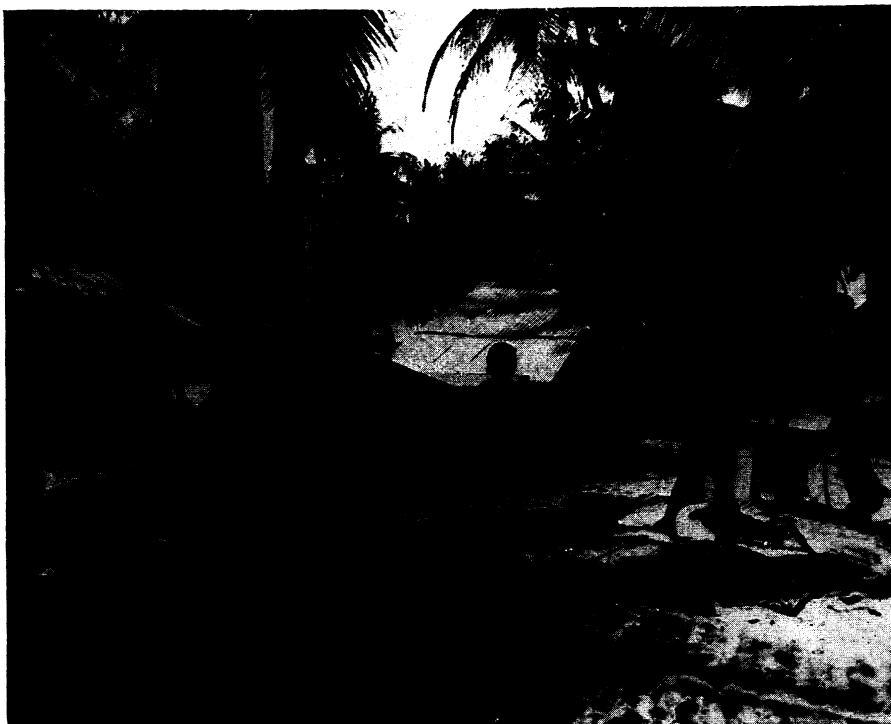
This quicker treatment, however, speeds up recovery only when the disturbance results from a situation, as in war. In that case there is some hope of changing the situation to aid the patient's recovery. If the trouble, however, results from the patient having developed as a small child a faulty attitude toward life, the treatment will be long since it involves re-educating him.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1946

There are now 22 giant *tortoises* at the Bronx Zoo, of which 18 came originally from the Galapagos islands on the equator west of South America, and three from Aldabra island off the coast of Africa.

Long stalks of *asparagus* can be cooked tender their entire length if stood loosely in boiling water in the bottom section of a double boiler, with the upper section inverted to cover the tips; the steam cooks the tips.

Silk gut used for fishing tackle is obtained from the silk glands of an insect closely related to the silkworm.



Joint Army-Navy Task Force One photograph.

SETTLING DOWN ON RONGERIK—There's no housing shortage for King Juda and his Bikini subjects on their new island of Rongerik in the Marshalls. All native inhabitants were moved from Bikini Atoll by the American government to make way for the atomic bomb test. Rongerik was uninhabited when the move was initiated (See p. 347).