

MEDICINE

Hypnotic For Morbid Fear

Pentothal, a hypnotizing drug, brings on a trance that helps patients remember and tell painful experiences that aid psychiatrists in helping them.

► A HYPNOTIZING drug that helped soldiers recover from combat-induced mental sickness has helped a civilian patient to recover from his morbid dread of being shut up in a confined space. The case was reported by Dr. Milton Rosenbaum, of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine at the meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association.

The patient was a 50-year-old man who had had a malignant disease that might recur. Ordinary psychiatric treatment might have freed this patient from his morbid fear, but only after prolonged treatment. The patient's age and precarious state of health led his doctor to use the method that had led to swift recoveries of soldier patients.

The drug used is pentothal, one of the modern sleeping medicines. Besides putting a person to sleep it can be given in a dose that will bring on a trance in which the patient is able to recall and relate memories ordinarily shut away because they are so painful.

Just remembering the painful experiences will not cure the mental illness, Dr. Rosenbaum warned. Pentothal is not magic. During the war, psychiatrists found that after pentothal had helped soldier-patients recall their painful combat experiences, the psychiatrist still had to talk to them and help them understand how the experience led to mental breakdown.

In civilian life even more skill will be needed in using pentothal. Dr. Rosenbaum pointed out that the Army psychiatrists had been through much the same experiences as their patients and so could recognize the significant things the patient talked about while under pentothal. In civilian life the psychiatrist must draw on his knowledge of causes of mental illness in general and of the patient's own background and history to recognize what is important in the things he says under pentothal.

In the case of the man with the claustrophobia, or fear of closed spaces, Dr. Rosenbaum had felt, from the first three interviews, that painful sexual experiences in childhood were probably behind the attacks of morbid fear as a grown-up.

Under pentothal, the patient recalled memories that were not new. He had recalled them before. But they bore out Dr. Rosenbaum's impression of the cause of the trouble and enabled him to point out to the patient what was back of his attacks.

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FOOD PROCESSING

Process Removes Oxygen In Vegetable Dehydration

► VEGETABLES being prepared for de-hydration are customarily blanched by scalding in hot water or steam. This is done mainly to destroy enzymes that would otherwise spoil colors and flavors by oxidation. This oxidation-spoilage problem is met in a different way in a process on which U. S. patent 2,415,995 has been issued to Harold K. Derby of Berkeley, Calif.

Instead of destroying the oxidizing enzymes, he removes the oxygen without which they cannot function. This is done

simply by putting the vegetables under water in a closed vessel and exhausting the air with an aspirator. After all the air has bubbled out of the vegetables, air pressure is re-admitted to the vessel, sometimes with extra air pressure added. This fills up the evacuated air spaces in their tissues with water, which is subsequently removed, along with their own natural water content, in the dehydrating process.

Rights in the patent have been assigned to F. E. Booth Company, Inc., of San Francisco.

Science News Letter, March 1, 1947

ENGINEERING

Better Fluorescent Lighting Will Reach Homes of Future

► HOMES of the future will be lighted by fluorescent fixtures.

One reason is because more light is provided by fluorescent lighting at the same cost for power than by conventional methods. Another is because better phosphors are now available, and also because circular, semi-circular and coiled tubes for home lamps have been developed that are decorative in appearance.

Shadow-free lighting is another feature of fluorescent tubes, according to a report to the American Chemical Society in Milwaukee by Dr. Sampson Isenberg of Chicago.

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TELEVISION MIRRORS—A complex optical system, developed by the American Optical Company, will produce television pictures five times larger than pre-war sets. Television images from the receiver's cathode-ray tube are enlarged by the mirror, then reflected through the correcting lens to a flat mirror which in turn reflects the focused picture onto the viewing screen.