

PSYCHOLOGY

Illiterates More NP Risk

► WHILE CONGRESS wrestled with the problem of draft deferment for college students, Navy-supported research showed a problem at the other end of the educational scale.

This is the relation between illiteracy and neuropsychiatric disorders.

As a group, illiterates are a greater neuropsychiatric risk than literates, Comdr. William A. Hunt, MSC, U. S. N. R., and Comdr. Cecil L. Wittson, MC, U. S. N. R., find. Their study was made of records of over 1,400 illiterate recruits arriving at a naval installation for literacy training during the last war.

"Of every group of 100 illiterates inducted for military service," they report, "about 15 will be given neuropsychiatric discharges before their literacy-training program is completed and three more will be neuropsychiatric casualties by the end of the first year of service.

"It is impossible to unravel the actual cost of this high neuropsychiatric rate to the Government," the two officers state. "The cost is high, but whether or not it is compensated for by the service rendered by the 82 still surviving after one year is an open question."

If the manpower situation becomes so acute that illiterates must again be inducted into the armed forces, Commanders Hunt and Wittson suggest that intensive psychiatric service for both diagnosis and treatment should be provided, as well as training or attempts at training in reading and writing.

Being illiterate, or unable to read and write, is not just a matter of never having gone to school and learned reading and writing, they point out. Illiteracy is often a symptom of some underlying personality difficulty which perhaps made the man unable as a child to learn to read and write.

On the other hand, the handicap of illiteracy may contribute to the development of personality disorders.

Mental deficiency, personality disorder, psychoneurosis, schizophrenia, epilepsy and constitutional psychopathic state were among the diagnoses given illiterates discharged for neuropsychiatric reasons in the group studied.

The research, carried on at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., is reported in the U. S. ARMED FORCES MEDICAL JOURNAL (March).

Science News Letter, April 21, 1951

BACTERIOLOGY

Antidote to Ultraviolet, Daylight, Is Cancer Hope

► ORDINARY DAYLIGHT provides an antidote to ultraviolet ray death. That is the case at least for cells such as bacteria and molds and may be true for cells of the human body.

Dr. Albert Kelner, Harvard University bacteriologist, found that recovery of cells given the visible light treatment after usually fatal doses of ultraviolet rays was so complete that he feels there is being studied "the key factor in the mechanism causing death by ultraviolet radiation."

Visible light not only prevents death of the cell but probably also reduces the number of mutations, or permanent changes in heredity, which are also caused by short-wave ultraviolet radiation.

If, as Dr. Kelner's work suggests, the killing and mutation-inducing effects of ultraviolet can be reversed or prevented, perhaps the cancer-inducing effect of short-wave ultraviolet radiation can also be reversed or prevented. The answer to this must come from future research.

Science News Letter, April 21, 1951

● RADIO

Saturday, April 28, 1951, 3:15-3:30 p.m. EST

"Adventures in Science," with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over Columbia Broadcasting System.

Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, professor of medicine for the Mayo Foundation at the University of Minnesota, and author of the book "How To Live With Your Nerves," will discuss "The Little Strokes."

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