

PSYCHIATRY

Handle N. P.'s Firmly

► **KOREAN SOLDIERS** who try to get away from the fighting because they are "too nervous for combat" later do just as well in combat as those who never complain of nervousness.

This was reported to the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Los Angeles by Dr. Robert M. Edwards of Winter Veterans Hospital, Topeka, Kans., and Col. Donald B. Peterson, Army psychiatrist.

Our country, hard-pressed for combat men, has had to find ways to cut down on unnecessary losses, they told the meeting. The psychiatrist has helped by taking a firm attitude toward upset and frightened soldiers. One of the chief jobs of the division psychiatrist is to support other combat physicians in keeping soldiers in the field.

"In combat," the psychiatrists explained, "the psychiatrist can't delve too deeply into a patient's personality problems. If the sol-

dier does his real job, which is to fight as well as he can, he will meet later problems better, too."

Psychiatric screening at the induction station is a "myth," except for the rejection of the obviously unfit, Dr. Ivan C. Berlien of Detroit told the meeting.

Dr. Berlien compared the psychiatric rejection rate at various well-staffed and under-staffed induction stations with later discharges for neuropsychiatric reasons. At stations where screening was strict, he found, the discharge rate was disproportionately high. It was not proportionately higher where the screening was lax.

"In other words," Dr. Berlien told the meeting, "there is a terrific loss of manpower for the sake of excluding a few men who will become psychiatric casualties."

Science News Letter, May 16, 1953

PSYCHIATRY

Witness Fitness Test

► **COURTS SHOULD** call on psychiatrists to appraise witnesses at a trial as well as the sanity of the defendant or the damage to the feelings of a claimant, Dr. Henry A. Davidson, lecturer in legal medicine at the Medical College of Virginia, Richmond, declared at the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Los Angeles.

At present, he said, "a pathological liar, a hysterical girl, a man whose memory plays tricks on him or who confuses fact with fantasy, and even a victim of a persecutory delusion may all parade to the witness stand."

Unless discredited by some legal trick, the testimony of such persons may be given full weight by a jury unfamiliar with mental sickness. Gauging their credibility at present seems to be largely a matter of "the judge's intuition and the juror's hunch."

A psychiatrist can usually determine

whether and to what extent a witness has the four traits necessary to accurate testimony: ability to observe intelligently, to remember clearly, to speak coherently, to be free of emotional drive to distort the truth.

"Most witnesses are psychiatrically normal," Dr. Davidson said. "But there are enough psychopaths, hysterics, alcoholics, schizophrenics, maniacs, neurotics, paranoics and mental defectives in the world to constitute a large pool of potential witnesses. Since many such people are peculiarly litigious (fond of law suits) they may well be over represented among eager witnesses.

"Considering how vital oral testimony is, it is astonishing," Dr. Davidson declared, "that so much justice is dispensed on the basis of testimony of persons whose emotional and intellectual capacity has not been determined."

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MEDICINE

Living Cells Aid Anti-Allergy Fight

► **TO AID** in the fight against hayfever and other allergies, living cells are taken from the lining of human noses and grown in small covered glass dishes.

Effects on these cells of pollens and other allergy causing substances, and of antihistamines, adrenalin and antibodies in helping the cells fight the allergy causers can be studied with this set-up, Dr. C. M. Pomerat of the University of Texas, Medical Branch, Galveston, has found.

Science News Letter, May 16, 1953

● RADIO

Saturday, May 23, 1953, 3:15-3:30 p.m. EDST
"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Charles N. Kimball, president of the Midwest Research Institute, Kansas City, Mo., discusses "How Research Institutes Serve Industry."

MEDICINE

New Drug Helps Some Palsy Victims

► A **NEW** drug for treatment of Parkinson's disease, known also as shaking palsy and paralysis agitans, has been on trial at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., for the past two years.

About three-fourths of the 102 patients who have gotten it for three months to two years felt that it was better than anything they had previously used and these 75 showed objective evidence of improvement.

The drug is called compound 08958 by its manufacturers, Eli Lilly and Company. Chemically it is 1-phenyl-1-cyclopentyl-3-piperidino-1-propanol hydrochloride. It is related to another of the newer drugs for Parkinson's disease, artane, and is about as effective.

It seems to be of most benefit for patients suffering from oculogyric crisis, in which the eyeballs become fixed in one position for minutes or hours.

Compound 08958, however, has in no instance "altered the progress of the illness or given more than partial relief of symptoms," Dr. Donald W. Mulder declared in reporting the study of it at a staff meeting.

Science News Letter, May 16, 1953

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By A. G. Mears, A.S.D.

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