

PSYCHIATRY

New Shock Treatment

➤ NEITHER electric stimulation nor convulsion may be necessary components in the electroshock treatment of certain types of mental illness.

Laughing gas, truth serum and other anesthetics may be as effective as the electroshock.

This is suggested by research of Drs. Norman Q. Brill, Evelyn Crumpton, Samuel Eiduson, H. M. Grayson, L. I. Hellman and R. A. Richards of the University of California at Los Angeles Medical School and the Los Angeles VA Center (Brentwood Neuropsychiatric Hospital).

A group of 97 mental patients were involved in the study. Sixty-seven of the group were schizophrenics. The remainder were depressed patients.

Patients were assigned at random to one of five treatment groups: 1. conventional electroshock therapy (EST); 2. a combination of EST and the drug, anectine; 3. EST and truth serum (pentothal); 4. pentothal alone, and 5. laughing gas (nitrous oxide) alone.

In the non-shock treatment groups EST was simulated so that all patients thought they were receiving some form of electroshock treatment.

All types of treatment led to marked improvement in the patient as measured by psychiatric evaluations and psychological tests. There were no statistically significant differences in the benefit from variations of electroshock therapy and the anesthetics alone.

These results suggest neither electrical stimulation nor convulsion is a necessary component of treatment, particularly for chronic schizophrenics, the doctor said.

Repeated rapid induction of unconsciousness may be the effective therapy component. Or such psychological factors as the treatment's meaning to the patient, desire for punishment, etc., and the unusual amount of care and attention to the patient involved in the experimental procedures may be important factors.

Science News Letter, June 21, 1958

OBSTETRICS

Study Russian Obstetrics

➤ PREGNANT Russian women can legally choose to have their baby or an abortion.

If the women want their babies, the government gives them the best care available, a California physician reports.

If the baby is unwanted by the mother, she can arrange for a legal abortion, if the choice is made during the first three months of pregnancy, Dr. Lloyd F. Smith of Monrovia, Calif., reports in *GP* (June), the publication of the American Academy of General Practice.

The annual abortion rate in Moscow is close to 36,000, Dr. Smith speculates. He recently returned from a visit to a Moscow maternity hospital.

Every Russian doctor who expressed an opinion on the matter was an atheist, eliminating any moral problem. Consequently, Dr. Smith says, the question is reduced to what is good for the State and what is desired by the patient.

The Russians stress natural childbirth delivery. The pregnant women meet in small groups to receive instructions concerning the process of labor and delivery. Little medication is given during any phase of labor or delivery.

Women whose delivery promises to be a normal event are assigned midwives. Complicated cases receive care by a trained obstetrician. The midwives reassure the patients and build up a bond of confidence, the visiting American doctor noted. However, if the midwife finds any abnormality occurring in the process, she immediately calls in one of the many available trained specialists.

Dr. Smith reports he saw only iodine used as a skin antiseptic in Russia.

After the baby is born, it is washed, measured and weighed. The eyes are cleansed with a solution.

A woman usually stops work 56 days before her expected confinement. She is usually allowed another 56 days after the delivery. When she returns to work, she puts the baby in a nearby convenient nursery.

While the hospital buildings in Moscow were old, they were clean. The midwives impressed him as experts, Dr. Smith says. However, there seemed to be a severe shortage of drugs.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Techniques Clue to Pre-Columbian History

➤ SCIENTISTS are trying to tie up the loose ends of pre-Columbian American history by studying the techniques of woven plant materials.

Dr. Charles E. Rozaire, University of California at Los Angeles archaeologist and assistant curator of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, has found that certain twining techniques of weaving plant materials may be a clue to the relationship of groups of ancient Indian tribes in North America.

Earlier evidence of twined weaving comes from the northern Great Basin of North America. Radioactive carbon dating methods indicate that the woven fragments from this region may be as much as 10,000 years old.

The UCLA archaeologist has made a

study of similarly woven materials found on San Nicolas Island off the California coast.

The California relics are about 800 years old, Dr. Rozaire says. They consist of woven sea-grass skirts, mats, robes, basketry fragments, and braided and twisted cordage.

Polynesian-like traits have been noted in the material from California's Channel Islands. But the twining techniques and resultant products are more characteristic of the North American mainland.

Thus types of weaving in ancient fragments, along with recovered pottery and arrowheads, may be clues to the relationships of some widely scattered peoples in prehistoric times.

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