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MEDICINE

Doctors Need Tranquilizers

IT IS THE DOCTOR who needs those tranquilizers, not the patient.

This was the implication conveyed by several speakers at a seminar in Washington, D. C., on the current uses of tranquilizers, stimulants and related drugs.

Perhaps general practitioners are doling out the calming pills to relieve their own anxieties which develop when they do not know what to do for a patient, Dr. Joel Elkes of the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Md., suggested at the meeting sponsored by the Medical Society of the District of Columbia.

Tranquilizers can only treat symptoms. They cure nothing, he stressed. Furthermore, they tend to "mask" symptoms that the doctor could find useful in diagnosing the patient's problem.

They abolish hostility, fear, and anxiety which are useful symptoms to the practitioner. The doctor can become frustrated and anxious himself when these symptoms become evident in a patient. It must be kept in mind that abolishing these symptoms does not cure the patient, he said.

Additional criticism came from Dr. Otis R. Farley, director of the medical and surgical branch of St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D. C. He reminded the doctor audience that many of these popular drugs can alter the body's ability to fight infections. Others can cause skin rash, and affect the function of the adrenal glands and entire enzyme system.

Furthermore, there is no specific antidote for many of the tranquilizing drugs. Many of them have proven fatal when given in seemingly small dosages, he cautioned. By the time the physician is aware that the dosage is fatal, he cannot do much because there is no counteracting agent available for many of the drugs.

Doctors should also be aware of the dangers of administering these drugs in

combination with other drugs. Dr. Farley pointed out that not enough is known about combinations of such drugs to justify less than a very cautious approach. He urged that the synergistic action, the action of combinations of drugs, be studied at length.

Questioning the claims and favorable reputation that rapidly developed after tranquilizers were introduced, he reminded doctors that he had seen more people develop bed wetting than he had seen cured of it as a result of treatment with the drugs.

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CHEMISTRY

Exotic A-Fuels Seen As Product of Pressure

NEW AND EXOTIC reactor fuels were foreseen as the possible offspring of further research into the effects of high pressures and temperatures on materials.

C. M. Schwartz, Battelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, Ohio, told the American Institute of Chemical Engineers meeting in Atlanta, Ga., that the application of ultra high pressures should become an important tool in promoting changes and reactions in materials.

The resulting materials often would have unusual qualities. Many could be expected to have higher densities, and hardnesses.

As the pressure and temperature capabilities of the research equipment is improved, "there is little doubt that new materials having unique properties will be synthesized," Mr. Schwartz said. The outlook is equally promising in the fields of organic and inorganic chemistry.

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