

PSYCHIATRY

# Social Method of Treating Mental Illness Encouraging

## Mentally Sick Patients Respond to Treatment in Groups; Ban on Capital Punishment for Youths Urged

**E**NCOURAGING results from treating mentally sick patients in groups of from two to seven rather than individually were reported by Dr. Paul Schilder, Bellevue Hospital, New York City, at the joint meeting of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychopathological Association at St. Louis, Mo., this week.

The method, termed "truly social" by Dr. Schilder, has already given good results with children. Dr. Schilder's report this morning was based on experience with adult patients suffering from a great variety of mental ails, many of whom had previously received other forms of treatment. The cases were severe and mostly of long standing. The patient had individual interviews with the psychiatrist as well as the advantages of the group discussion of his own and other patients' problems. As part of the treatment each patient, after preliminary discussions, was required to write a detailed history of his life. This personal history formed a basis for other parts of the treatment.

### Winning Confidence

Making friends with the mentally sick patient is a necessary first step in treatment of his illness, Dr. Lewis B. Hill of Baltimore told the meeting.

Only after the patient feels the physician is his friend can he be taught to understand what is wrong with him, why he is mentally sick, and then how to overcome the conditions that make him sick.

The process of making friends with the mentally sick patient, however, is not easy. Such a patient has "lost the ability to enjoy satisfying and enriching friendly relationships," Dr. Hill explained. His self-regard has been seriously reduced and he no longer expects to get pleasure out of any situation. Consequently he does not have the usual motive for trying to get well, which is the expectation of enjoying life again.

Before the physician can be a friend to the patient, he has to build up the patient's willingness or desire to accept

and give friendship. To do this, the physician must be careful not to hurt the patient's self-regard. He must manage the treatment so that the patient feels it is a treat. By such means and by a steady friendly attitude, the physician can restore the patient's self-confidence and break down his attitude of caution and of being on the defensive. When by this method the patient is brought to the point of making friends with the psychiatrist, he shows a peculiar talent for making effective use of psychoanalytic methods which give him insight into his condition.

### Children's Problems Solved

Puppet shows and group classes in puppetry, art, music and other group projects proved a surprisingly helpful method of handling children with mental and nervous disease, mental defects and behavior problems, Dr. Laretta Bender of Bellevue Hospital, New York City, reported.

The group method of handling these children was started through necessity because of the large number of child patients and the small staff at the hospital. But it was found to have a definite advantage over individual treatment in getting at the children's difficulties and in helping them to solve emotional conflicts. Many children showed definite evidence of improvement in their behavior difficulties although they had little contact with the psychiatrist. A routine program of various group activities, including school classes, supervised play and the like, kept the children busy and happy and satisfied their growing needs, emotionally, physically, intellectually and socially. At the same time the psychiatrist, although keeping a supervising eye on all the children, was able to concentrate his time on the most difficult cases.

### Thyroid Helps Epileptics

Treatment with thyroid gland extract is beneficial in some cases of epilepsy, Dr. Calvert Stein of Monson State Hospital at Palmer, Mass., reported at another session devoted to problems con-

nected with epilepsy and other disorders in which convulsions—"fits" in popular language—are the chief feature. Dr. Stein has been trying various gland extracts in the treatment of epilepsy. Most useful is the thyroid extract, though he pointed out that it does not benefit all epileptic patients. Those whom it does help are improved in general health and thereby have fewer epileptic seizures than before treatment. This does not mean that the seizures were due to any defect of the thyroid gland. The improvement, Dr. Stein explained, is probably due to the fact that the thyroid extract gives additional stimulus to normal functioning throughout the body, since the thyroid is naturally a powerful regulator of body activity and functioning.

### Crime Problem Discussed

A ban on capital punishment of youthful criminals, regardless of the type of crime they have committed, was strongly urged by Dr. Baldwin L. Keyes of Philadelphia.

In the Middle Ages, Dr. Keyes pointed out, such executions of the young were frequent. Executions of adolescent criminals in the United States in recent years shows that little progress has since been made in methods of controlling youths who commit serious offenses.

Dr. Keyes asked the Association to take official action on the matter, such as requesting the American Bar Association to consider steps leading to abolishment of legal execution of criminal offenders under 21 years of age.

An improved method for examining alleged criminals to determine whether they are suffering from mental, nervous or personality disorders was reported by Dr. Lowell S. Selling of the Psychopathic Clinic of the Recorder's Court of Detroit.

The formal psychiatric examination used in clinics and physicians' offices takes too long and is otherwise unsuitable for use in making criminological examinations for courts, Dr. Selling pointed out. Most defendants are unwilling to talk because it is not in their interest, so the usual direct questioning has to be supplanted by indirect and concealed questioning. It is difficult to get a spontaneous life history except in the case of forgers "who were more than anxious to tell everything about their lives, but it was seldom truthful and less frequently worth anything." To save time and to get better cooperation, Dr. Selling has adopted the plan of having the defendants write their autobiographies. Some of the usual tests were

found unsatisfactory for criminological examination because they involved the use of blocks, which the defendants thought silly.

In part of his test Dr. Selling uses three types of formal psychiatric tests: the group intelligence test, the neurotic inventory, and a standardized inventory of special abilities or traits.

Sex offenders are the hardest to examine, Dr. Selling said. Unless much care is taken, these will seldom give enough information to enable the physician to get a real understanding of the case. About 85 per cent of these at the beginning of the examination deny categorically that they have committed the crime of which they have been convicted.

### Glands May Make Children "Bad"

When a boy, or girl, is so "bad" that his behavior constitutes a problem, the fault may lie with the child's glands of internal secretion. About one-fourth of the boys in an institution for delinquents had some disorder of the endocrine glands, Dr. Matthew Molitch of Jamesburg, N. J., reported. This suggests, in Dr. Molitch's opinion, that there may be some relationship between behavior problems and the endocrine glands, and shows the need for further study.

The pituitary gland, important director of body activity, was functioning abnormally in almost half of the boys Dr. Molitch described. These boys were either too short or too tall for their age. Some were overweight and some were tall, thin and weak. Some had delayed sexual development. A small group had underactive thyroid glands. The intelligence of the entire group showing glandular disorders was not very different from that of the other boys in the institution, but the boys with glandular disorders were more unstable and troublesome than the rest.

### Breathing Reveals Personality

The manner in which a person breathes is as characteristic as his handwriting, Dr. Franz Alexander of Chicago told the meeting.

The fact that emotions influence breathing, excitement sometimes making a person breathe faster, for example, is well known. With Dr. Leon J. Saul, Dr. Alexander investigated this, examining the manner of breathing of 300 mentally sick patients and of normal persons and patients suffering from diseases other than mental.

They found, among other things, relationships between a pause in breathing and a certain type of neurotic reaction;

between slight interruptions of breathing and digestive tract disturbances; between still another type of breathing, characterized by inspiratory spikes on the charted curve of breathing, and certain poorly repressed, unconscious desires.

Is there a really normal person and, if so, where is he?

This question was raised by Dr. L. W. Darrah of the Gardner, Mass., State Colony.

If such a paragon as the normal person does exist, he would probably be a

mediocre, uninteresting chap, it appears from Dr. Darrah's remarks. All the glib talk about "normal minds," "acting normally," or "doing things in a normal way," has little meaning, since no one apparently knows just what "normal" is. Almost everyone, Dr. Darrah pointed out, seems to have an idea of what an abnormal person is, but no one has tried seriously to describe or define the almost mythical normal person. Many textbooks do not even list "normal" in the index.

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### PHYSICS

## New Design of Cloud Chamber Cuts Weight over 900 Pounds

THE WILSON cloud chamber apparatus, which is one of the most potent tools of science for taking actual photographs of the breakup of atoms, has been redesigned into an instrument which weighs only 76 pounds, declared Dr. Gordon L. Locher of Bartol Research Foundation of the Franklin Institute before the American Physical Society. Hitherto, cloud chamber apparatus have been unwieldy, heavy instruments weighing hundreds and even thousands of pounds. It was in such an instrument

that Dr. Carl Anderson first discovered the new atomic particle, the positron.

Dr. Locher's variation of the famous instrument was designed for the stratosphere flight of Dr. and Mrs. Jean Piccard. He constructed a similar one for the last stratosphere flight of the Explorer II of the National Geographic Society and Army Air Corps. It is semi-automatic in operation and is made of lightweight Dowmetal.

The new lightweight instrument should find wide use in studies of



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