

PSYCHIATRY

Insulin Promises Cure For Common Mental Disease

Treatment Used in Vienna and Confirmed by Trials In United States Gives New Hope to Thousands

INSULIN, the gland extract that makes life possible for thousands of persons suffering from diabetes, now promises to save other thousands from the living death of insanity.

The accidental discovery of the effect of this gland extract on the clouded minds of narcotic drug addicts and sufferers from schizophrenia (split-mind), wide-spread mental disease, was described by Dr. Manfred Sakel of Vienna, Austria, at the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in Pittsburgh, Pa. This treatment is being hailed as almost the first promising weapon of attack on this centuries-old mental disease.

A morphine addict in a Vienna hospital, the story goes, was found to be suffering from diabetes. He was given insulin for this condition. As sometimes happens with insulin treatment, he had an "insulin shock," a state the reverse of diabetes in which the body uses up sugar too fast and the amount of sugar in the blood falls below normal level. Much to the doctor's surprise, when this patient recovered from the insulin shock, his mental condition was greatly improved.

Other patients, who had no diabetes but were suffering either from drug addiction or from mental disease, were then given large doses of insulin, to induce shock. In many of these, the mental condition also improved, apparently permanently.

Confirmation

Similar experiences with the use of this new treatment for schizophrenia were reported by these American psychiatrists: Drs. Solomon Katzenelbogen, Herbert Harms and Dean A. Clark of Henry Phipps Psychiatric Clinic, Baltimore, and Spring Grove State Hospital, Md.; Drs. Joseph Wortis, Karl M. Bowman and Leo Orenstein of Bellevue Hospital, New York; and Drs. G. Alexander Young, Richard H. Young and Louis G. Roucek of Omaha.

From a third to half the patients treated by this method showed improve-

ment in their mental state which appears to be permanent, although the treatment is so new that it is not yet possible to say how long the improvement will last. In some cases it has lasted for three years.

The psychiatrists seem agreed that the treatment is most successful in acute cases of schizophrenia in which the patients are young and have not been ill very long. Chronic cases do not seem to respond as well to the treatment.

The treatment is not without danger. Insulin shock brings on hypoglycemia, a grave condition in which there is less than normal sugar in the blood. This condition occurs spontaneously in some persons who show symptoms that may be mistaken for mental disease. Drs. Edwin J. Kepler and Frederick P. Moersch of the Mayo Clinic reported. Hypoglycemia leads rapidly to death, unless the sugar lack is promptly remedied. This may be done by injecting sugar into the veins or giving the patient sugar water to drink.

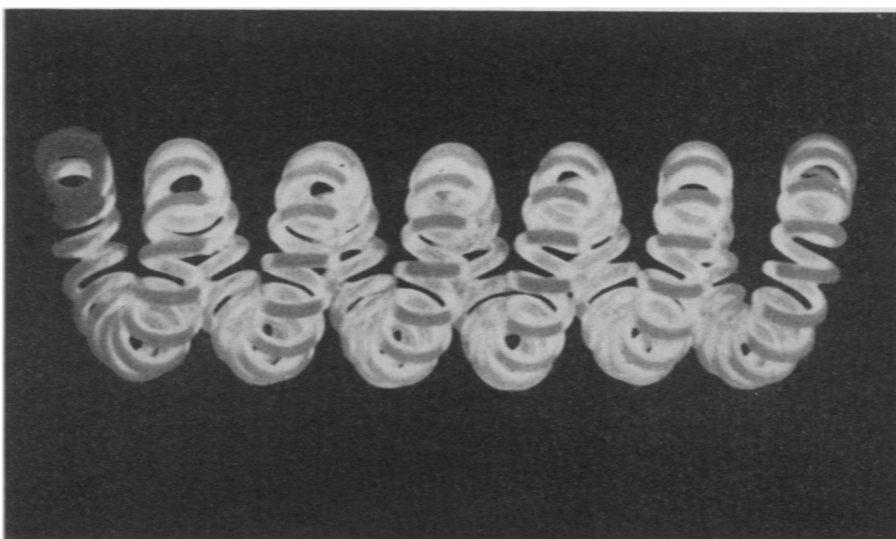
When insulin shock is induced to

treat mental disease, the resulting hypoglycemia or sugar lack is checked by giving sugar. The danger of this new mental disease treatment is that the sugar may not be given soon enough. The Omaha physicians reported two deaths and two other cases which nearly ended fatally in spite of efforts to bring the sugar level back to normal following the shock.

How or why insulin shock restores the sanity of the patients is still an unsolved mystery. It may be that the shock itself jolts the mind back to normal, or it may be that the temporary change in the sugar level restores the body's intricate chemical processes to normal. Since no one knows what causes schizophrenia, no one can yet say why the treatment remedies the condition in certain cases. But the treatment itself may give a clue that will lead to solution of the cause of the disease. That in turn should lead to even greater success with the treatment since it will show how the treatment can be modified and made specific—a "sure cure," perhaps.

Large Group

Schizophrenia is the term covering a large group of mental diseases or psychoses. It is also known as dementia praecox. The fundamental basis of personality consists of a person's mood and emotions. Unity and harmony of emotions and association of ideas is so usual that it is almost inconceivable that there should be any lack of such agreement. But this sort of mental disease is charac-



COIL AND RECOIL

This is how the coil in a new incandescent lamp looks when it is magnified. Recoiling the coil on itself is said to reduce the amount of wattage drained away by the gas in the bulb and increase the amount available for light.