



Mental Health

Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 5

May, 1961

Editorially Speaking

Action for Mental Health, the summary report of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health, is required reading for all mental health people, whatever their professional background or job title. This authoritative study, sponsored by an Act of Congress in 1955 and implemented by a blue-ribbon team of experts, speaks out boldly and bluntly in its evaluation of the national needs and resources of the mentally ill. It is well written, thoroughly documented, candid, tough, and radical. It is a breath of fresh air.

Basic facts emerge: the widening gap between required services and available professional manpower; the failure to come to grips with the core problem, mental illness itself.

The report stresses the need for stimulation of career interest in mental health work. Recruitment in this broad sense should begin with youngsters in high school. All professionals have an obligation to devote some portion of their time to education and career encouragement. Mental health education should concern itself not with happy talk, but with a presentation of the facts of mental illness and retardation and the known techniques and available resources for dealing with them.

The report hits the parochialism of the mental health professions: we must not only work with each other but also undertake the development and training of non-professional "mental health counselors". Here we utilize this concept in our community programs, in the realization that we must develop the powers of observation and interpersonal skills of those who deal with mental health problems in their earliest stages—principally teachers, clergymen and general physicians.

The suggestions for hospital services are not as satisfactory. The call for a halt to mental hospital expansion is healthy, as is the suggestion for more psychiatric beds in general hospitals. The suggested division of hospitals into acute treatment and all-purpose chronic disease types appears good at first glance, until one realizes how quickly this could deteriorate into the old receiving and transfer hospital system.

The report hints that administration of mental hospitals by professional non-medical administrators might be feasible and that a national health insurance scheme might be an ultimate necessity. It comes to grips openly with the inadequacy of state government to handle a problem of this vast magnitude; it flatly calls for massive federal assistance and, principally through federal grants to states, for a trebling of expenditures for mental health within the next ten years.

There is much, much more in the report—you are encouraged to read it. The authors are to be congratulated for a brilliant achievement.

David J. Vail, M.D.
Medical Director

Psychiatric Institutes Set For State Hospital Physicians

Dr. Knight Aldrich, professor of psychiatry, University of Chicago, will lead the week-long training seminar in psychiatry for state hospital physicians at Rochester, May 22-26. Also serving on the training faculty will be five staff members of the Mayo Clinic.

The Institute, with emphasis on problems in ward management, will be patterned after a similar institute held at the Hastings State Hospital last June. In attendance at this year's session will be 15 physicians, representing each of the seven state hospitals for the mentally ill.

Advanced Seminar in Psychiatry in June

Physicians who participated in last year's psychiatric training program will be invited to attend an advanced seminar at Hastings State Hospital June 12-14. Returning as seminar leader will be Dr. Marvin Adland, Clinical Director of the Chestnut Lodge Sanatorium in Rockville, Md.

Anoka Hospital Fashion Course Nets Peabody Award for WCCO-TV

Cited in the George Foster Peabody Award received last month by WCCO-TV for meritorious locally produced television programming was "Arle Haeberle's Capsule Fashion Course", filmed at Anoka State Hospital.

Last fall Miss Haeberle, with the cooperation of the Minnesota Association for Mental Health, was instrumental in organizing a group of fashion experts to work with female patients at the Anoka State Hospital. Purpose of the series of weekly classes was to provide expert counsel and instruction in hair styling, make-up, clothing selection and style. Films were taken during the class sessions and subsequent "fashion show" and shown on Miss Haeberle's Around the Town television program.

Forensic Psychiatry Program to be Held at Rochester Hospital

Dr. M. D. Eilenberg, psychiatrist of the Maudsley Hospital, London, England will explain the 1959 Mental Health Act of England at a workshop on the legal aspects of mental health treatment procedures. Host for the June 14th program will be Rochester State Hospital. Invited to attend have been probate judges, county attorneys and sheriffs from the 15 county receiving district of the hospital.

An afternoon panel discussion will be moderated by the Honorable Harry A. Blackmun, Judge, U. S. Circuit Court. Panel members will include Dr. H. Rome, head of the department of psychiatry, Mayo Clinic; Mr. A. M. Keith, State Senator, Mr. D. T. Franke, State Representative, Mr. R. G. Flynn, Assistant Attorney General, and Dr. David J. Vail, Director of Medical Services.

Final Report of 5 Year Study of Alcoholism at Willmar Released

The final report of the Alcohol Addiction Project, a five year research study of the problems of alcohol addiction and the effectiveness of the hospital treatment program was released earlier this month by the Willmar State Hospital. The Project was financed by grants from the Hill Family Foundation and begun in 1956.

Emphasized in the report is the absence of a "typical" alcoholic and the wide variety of alcoholisms present in the group of male alcoholics studied. Characteristic of the group was a higher rate of failures and near-failures in marriage.

According to the authors, Jean J. Rossi, Ph.D., Alex Stach, M.S. and Nelson J. Bradley, M.D., the relatively low proportion of recoveries (about 30% overall) is a reflection of the extreme complexities of the various alcoholisms. Increasing the intensity, but not necessarily the duration of the hospital's treatment program, would provide for a higher rate of recovery in the relatively unselected alcoholic population admitted for treatment, in the opinion of the authors.

An earlier report, "Dynamic Hospital Treatment of Alcoholism", appeared in the Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, published by the Laboratory of Applied Bio-dynamics, Yale University, in September 1960.

Additional 30 County Welfare Staff Complete 3 Phase Training Program

Joining the list of over 700 county welfare department personnel who have completed the "Three Phase" education program are 30 staff members who finished their training April 20-21 in St. Paul.

The staff development series was begun in 1955, to better equip county welfare departments to understand the needs and problems of patients returning from state mental hospitals. Responsibility for follow-up services to discharged patients was assigned to the county welfare departments by the 1953 Legislature.

Included in the series is Phase I, a three day seminar on mental illness and its attendant problems; Phase II, a two day program at one of the state hospitals to gain firsthand information about the hospital treatment program; and Phase III, the final session, where practical aspects of county responsibility and follow-up procedures are considered.

An estimated additional 300 county welfare department staff are enrolled in the staff development project and have to date completed one or more of the sessions.