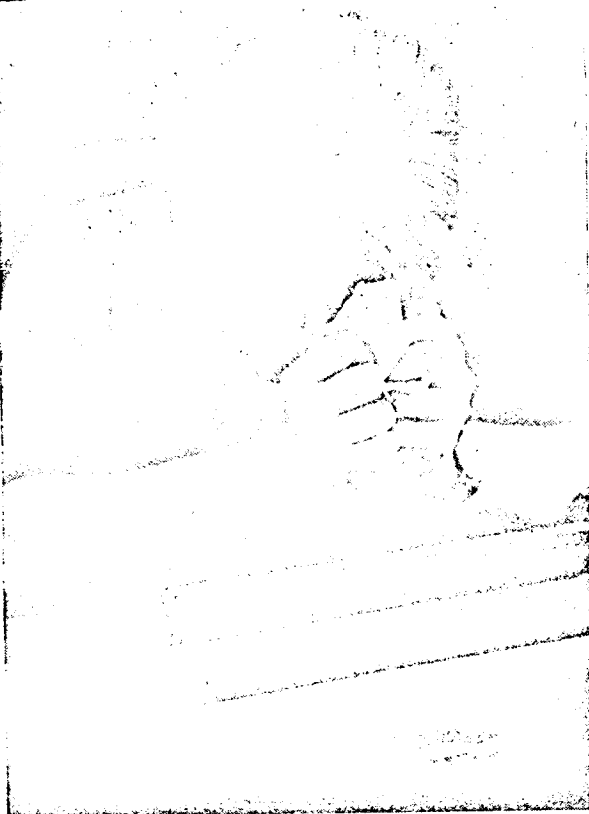


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VA finds occupational functioning, marital stability keys to curing alcoholism



Patients who stop taking disulfiram when they want a drink often reduce drug's value

LSD THERAPY—NO HELP FOR ALCOHOLICS

One popular misconception about treatment of alcoholism hopefully was laid to rest at the Veterans Administration's 14th Annual Conference on Co-operative Studies in Psychiatry in Houston, Tex. Also at the meeting, results of research were disclosed in other areas of mental illness, such as high anxiety.

The work covered at the conference only hinted at the massive efforts by VA in fields of mental illness. And these efforts continue to grow: VA now treats twice as many mentally ill patients as it did 15 years ago.

Regardless of earlier work and lay opinion, the value of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) as an aid to treatment of alcoholism is negligible, according to scientists and social workers at the Topeka, Kan., VA hospital. This conclusion comes from studies with five different groups of patients in the hospital's alcoholic treatment program conducted by William T. Dowan, Dr. Robert A. Soskin, and Dr. John W. Chotlos.

Two of five groups of patients suffering from alcoholism were given therapeutic (500 microgram) dosages of LSD, a third group was given placebo (25 microgram) dosages of LSD, and the two remaining groups given no LSD, but one of these two groups was given treatment in the hospital's human relations laboratory.

No significant differences among patients receiving large, small, or no LSD dosages could be found as measured by social abilities such as control of aggressiveness. One year after treatment no differences in degree of curing of alcoholism could be found between patients receiving therapeutic dosages of LSD and those receiving human relations treatment.

More important to the curing of alcoholism, the Topeka group finds, is the level of the patient's occupational functioning, his marital stability, and his completing a course of treatment.

Combinations of drugs, such as disulfiram (Antabuse) and metronidazole (Flagyl), fail to have a therapeutic effect on alcoholic patients, according to Dr. Emil Rothstein and Dr. David D. Clancy of the VA hospital at Brockton, Mass. Disulfiram has been used successfully for several years, but its value often is reduced because patients stop taking the drug anytime they want an alcoholic drink. (Alcohol ingested after taking disulfiram causes vomiting.) Metronidazole appeared to decrease the desire to drink so the two drugs were used in combination in order to make disulfiram therapy more effective.

Dr. Rothstein and Dr. Clancy conducted a study in which neither the patient nor the person administering the drug knew what was being given to the patient. All of the patients

were on disulfiram treatment. The patients received either metronidazole or a placebo in varying amounts for periods of one to eight months. Not only did the drugs have no therapeutic effect, but 20% of the men receiving the combination developed an acute, reversible confusional psychotic state, a new toxic phenomenon, the researchers say.

The search for ways to overcome timidity among mental patients, including those suffering from alcoholism, has involved some of the most timid dogs that can be found. Anxiety, which causes dogs to become rigid and unable to perform simple acts, appears radically reduced by giving the dogs 100 to 200 mg. per day of chlorodiazepoxide, according to Dr. Oddist D. Murphree of the VA hospital in North Little Rock, Ark. After administration of the drug was stopped, some dogs continued to do tasks they avoided in the state of high anxiety.