

*Militant groups everywhere
are joining the attack,
and men of science foresee
a breakthrough before long.*

The All-Out War on Mental

by Howard Earle



"Talking out" a problem with a therapist remains one of the basic treatments for mental illness.

IN CHICAGO recently, a young man raced about the city stabbing people at random with a long-bladed knife. He injured six persons the afternoon of his arrest. Questioned by police, he told them, "I'm doing humanity a service."

In a small college for women in the Southwest, Rosemary was regarded by her classmates as "stuck up." She kept to herself so much of the time, her withdrawal developed into complete isolation. One morning she failed to heed the breakfast call, and gave incoherent replies to all questions.

For 24 hours Rosemary refused to eat or move a muscle. Officials rushed her to the hospital and sent for her parents. She didn't recognize them.

In a small town in upper New York, a young woman received word one morning that her husband, their three children, and her mother had been killed in an automobile accident. She passed instantly into a dreamy state of semiconsciousness. She went on making their beds, setting their places at the table, and continuing life as though they were still alive. It wasn't until many months later, after she had reconciled herself to her tragic loss, that she awoke from her dreamlike state and began to recover.

The Chicago stabber, Rosemary, and the housewife had one thing in common: they were all mentally ill.

But there is new hope today for people like these, because of the all-out war being waged on many fronts against mental illness. From hospital wards, research laboratories, and pharmaceutical houses; from psychiatrists and other men of science, there come encouraging predictions for the future.

The concentrated attack of all these forces is against the most common cause of disability in the nation today.

Some 16 million people in the United States—almost one out of every ten persons—suffer from emotional disturbances and mental illness. More than 250,000 mentally ill were admitted to institutions for the first time this year; another 100,000 former mental patients were readmitted after relapses.

More than three-quarters of a million people are receiving care in mental hospitals. This is as many patients as are hospitalized on any one day for all other diseases combined! And there are many times that number in need of mental therapy.

Each year, care for mental patients costs Americans \$1 billion in taxes. In the same period, \$4 billion in potential earnings are lost by patients who enter mental hospitals for the first time.

But the future for the mentally ill is not as dark as these gloomy figures predict. The National Association for Mental Health, a leading organization in the battle against mental illness, takes an optimistic viewpoint. It holds that through advances in diagnosis, treatment, and prevention, mental and emotional disturbances are being handled with increased effectiveness. It feels even greater progress can be expected when the public fully accepts these disturbances as simply a form of illness.

Some of the early stages of mental disorders are caused by tensions which beset everyone. It is important that we learn as much as possible about mental illness so we can recognize mental and



Tools like this brain-wave test offer added hope.



Occupational therapy has proved helpful, too.

Illness

HOW TO BEAT TENSIONS

Dr. George S. Stevenson, medical consultant for the National Association for Mental Health, Inc., says people are not necessarily ill because they are occasionally tense and anxious. Everyone experiences tensions, says Dr. Stevenson, who suggests the following ways to deal with them:

- Talk it out when something worries you.
- Work off your anger by doing something constructive.
- If you are worrying too much about yourself, try doing something for someone else.
- Don't try to be a superman.
- Don't expect others to be supermen.

For a free booklet, "How to Deal with Your Tensions," write Better Mental Health, Dept. FW, Box 2500, New York 1, N.Y.

organic psychosis through injury to the brain.

Organic mental illness may be broken down into acute and chronic. Acute may be demonstrated by the drinker who suffers delirium tremens after too many bouts with John Barleycorn. Should these bouts continue and severe cases of delirium tremens result, the condition could develop into chronic mental deterioration with demonstrable brain damage.

Conversely, functional mental disorders are those in which there is no discernible bodily disorder.

Just where schizophrenia belongs—whether organic or functional—is a matter of diverse opinion even among mental-health specialists. But the specialists agree that more than half of all people now in mental hospitals are schizophrenics. The public has come to accept the term schizophrenia as meaning a split mind, but the illness goes much deeper than this.

Actually, there are four different types of schizophrenics, and sometimes a patient will exhibit behaviorisms from two or more of the types. Other patients may demonstrate no discernible trend other than temporary delusions.

Schizophrenia and other mental illnesses have become the nation's number-one health problem and have led scientists into an all-out hunt for a cure. Since 1954 that search has been aided by an ever-increasing number of drugs called tranquilizers.

These drugs have quieted the most disturbed wards, turning many agitated, aggressive patients into amenable ones. But the tranquilizers are far from a final cure. Many patients, especially those severely depressed, respond better to insulin and electro-shock

therapy. Others will respond only to psychotherapy.

Many experts hold that no physical treatment can have lasting effect unless accompanied by psychotherapy and that the tranquilizer cures nothing in itself. It merely calms the patient, these experts say, and brings him back to reality so that he can talk out his problems with the psychiatrist.

What powerful tranquilizers do for the seriously ill, milder tranquilizers do for the neurotic and overwrought. There is danger, however, in the continued use of tranquilizers for minor disorders. Doctors warn that they can divert the patient from solving his basic emotional problem.

The search, however, does not stop with tranquilizers. From Europe comes word of a new drug called Suavitil which, so far, shows no signs of being habit-forming. It is said to hold promise in the treatment of mental disorders which fail to respond to tranquilizers. The drug reportedly reduces tension, anxiety, and depression.

The number of drugs under research is unlimited, and new ones are being tested daily in the battle against mental illness. In addition, intensive research is under way to determine if there is any relationship between disorders of the body's metabolism and mental disorders.

A Tulane University research team has induced schizophrenic behavior in normal individuals by injecting doses of taraxien, a chemical substance found in the blood of schizophrenics. Two to ten minutes after the injection, signs of schizophrenia developed. The larger the dose, the more intense the reaction. Some scientists say these tests may support the theory that mental disease is of biochemical origin.

ANOTHER study of the relationship between body chemistry and mental illness suggests that a substance in the brain called serotonin is essential for proper mental health. A serotonin deficiency, researchers said, was found in all schizophrenics examined by them, indicating that serotonin plays an extremely important part in keeping us mentally balanced. Research now is looking for ways to build up the serotonin supply where a deficiency exists.

Relatively new in mental therapy is the now-recognized fact that mental patients show improvement when treated in community meetings.

At the U. S. Naval Base in Oakland, Calif., a "therapeutic community" was introduced into a receiving ward of a psychiatric treatment center. Seclusion rooms were discontinued, physical restraints were banned, and soothing injections and barbiturates were reduced drastically. Instead of putting a patient in a quiet room, he was placed with a group. There the mentally ill talked to one another in a way a doctor probably never could talk to them—and while they talked, the doctors listened.

Group activities have been found highly effective in strengthening the patient's ego so he no longer retreats from reality but learns to cope with it. Occupational therapy in groups has been well established as another means of aiding the mentally ill in recovering reality through mediums of expression. Modeled clay, a wax figure, or a pencil sketch often reveals more about delusions than a million words.

Another ally in the all-out attack on mental illness is religion, with clergymen throughout the country enlisting in the battle. In some cities, ministerial associations are taking group courses to help them understand causes and remedies for family problems which often lead to mental disorders.

No one is predicting a victory tomorrow—or next week. But hope for the future is brighter than ever. Men of science who are in a position to know say a breakthrough against mental illness is not far off.