

Mind-Scrambling Drugs Helpful in Alcoholic Cases

By DELOS SMITH
UPI Science Editor

New York — (UPI) — Mind-scrambling drugs produced an affect on hopeless, derelict-type alcoholics which nothing known to science had been able to produce — they feed, some, more or less, from the chains of drink.

Dr. Colin M. Smith brought this about in 12 such human wrecks. He had total failures in 12 others, but his 50 per cent success rate raised hopes that something extremely important is in the making. Alcoholism is a steadily intensifying national problem for which no real solution is in sight.

The chemical mind-scramblers are LSD-25 (D-lysergic acid diethylamide) and Mescaline. They produce, in even the sanest people, hallucinations and other mental disturbances which closely resemble those of true insanity. When the body disposes of the

drugs in a few hours, sanity returns.

Used on Hopeless Alcoholics
So far they are experimental laboratory drugs because no other use has been found for them. Smith experimented with them in hopeless alcoholics because previous experiments had shown that they frequently make people aware of deeply buried mental conflicts.

His 24 chronic drunks were all hospitalized for the consequences of their drunkenness, which included delirium tremens, "blackouts," and cirrhosis of the liver. He spent two to four weeks getting on intimate and trusting conversational terms with each of them.

Then one by one they were given large doses of one or the other of the mind scramblers. While each one was under its influence, Smith discussed the man's personal problems with him, especially those having to do with his drinking. Presumably the man was seeing these problems with a clarity with which he had never seen them before.

Smith also made "strong suggestions" to each scrambled mind that now was the time to give up drink. A few days later, the patient was discharged and was thereafter checked on by members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Three of them have now been followed-up for two years and there is no doubt that they either don't drink at all or drink much less.

The other 10 successes have been followed up for from two to 18 months. The 12 total failures were also checked, and they were failures from the very beginning. In fact, two were stealing alcohol and drinking it even before they were discharged from the hospital.

In his technical report to the Yale center for studies on alcohol, Smith emphasized the crudity of his techniques. After all, working with alcoholics is a complicated business and improved techniques will have to be worked out. For instance, Smith now is injecting himself with a mind-scrambler at the same time he injects the patient. It improves his ability to identify himself with the patient's problems.

Smith is deputy director of psychiatric research of the Public Health Department of Saskatchewan Province, Canada.

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