

The Medical Roundup

by

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Recognizing Mental Trouble

As I say here from time to time, many a woman who over the course of years has complained bitterly of an abdomen full of misery and, because of them, has three or four operations, has really been depressed and in need of a psychiatrist. I have seen cases in which all of the woman's aches and pains disappeared almost overnight - after a short course of electroshock treatments which cured her depression.

On several occasions, a doctor has brought me his wife, who was full of pain. Strangely to say, he had not seen the significance of the fact that she was badly depressed. Recently, Dr. Frank Ayd, Jr., wrote a splendid little book to show that one of the commonest diseases there is, and one that is most often misdiagnosed, is a mental depression. The patient usually talks of his abdominal pain, or his feelings of fatigue, or illness, or toxicity, and fails to say that he has had spells of sadness and discouragement and depression - perhaps somewhat like those of his mother or aunt.

For 25 years, while I was teaching graduate medical students, I often found it difficult to convince them that the woman before us was in need of psychiatric care and not in need of an operation for her gallstone or "fibroid," which was not producing any symptoms.

To Ill To Work

Many times I have had an able physician refer to me a patient who was too miserable and ill to work, and was thought to have some serious disease, perhaps of his sex glands. One glance at the shy, sad-faced man who couldn't look me in the eye, and one touch of his cold wet hand, and I knew that he was a schizophrenic. With a few questions, I learned that he, a man of 40, had never in his life dated a girl, and had never had a job. He had always lived with his mother. Probably the reason why his physician had never noticed that he was mentally disturbed was that in medical school the doctor had failed to get any training in psychiatry.

I am writing here of these mentally disturbed people because I recently read an article by Dr. Nathan S. Kline, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia university. He said what is so true, that present-day psychiatric concepts are so complex that most medical students, anticipating no great need for them in their future practice, either neglect the subject or soon after graduation forget what little they were taught.

Consequently, in this field of medicine a higher than average number of patients will be misdiagnosed, and as a result they will not receive the treatment they greatly need.

Deans of medical schools tell me that it is hard to find teachers capable of interesting the students in the art of recognizing and helping mentally disturbed and maladjusted patients. The students do not want to attend a course in psychiatry because they think they will never in their office see a patient with a mental problem. They could not be more wrong, because mental troubles are the commonest of all. A third of the people who come to me complaining of a stomach-ache or indigestion have some mental or nervous problem.

Training in Big City

Another reason why many

doctors rarely recognize "functional" (nervous) troubles is that they get their four years of practical training in a big city hospital or a University hospital in which most of the patients are seriously ill with the end-results of hardening of the arteries, in the heart, the brain, or the kidneys, or they are suffering from the end-results of high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes, chronic alcoholism or cancer.

Many a young doctor has said to me, "How can you expect me to recognize nervous and mental troubles in cultured people when, during my hospital days, my professors never showed me a single patient with such diseases?" What makes matters worse is that commonly, when a patient comes in with symptoms due to dissipation, alcoholism, much worry, divorce trouble or trouble with a problem child, he says nothing about what he is going through.

What is the lesson to be learned from this by people who are ill? The lesson is that when you go to a physician, and after having been examined you are told that your troubles are probably all due to "nerves," and that you are depressed, if you are going through a time of great stress or unhappiness, don't lie; tell him the truth about your troubles and sorrows and unhappiness. Then he may be able to help you.

You will understand the realities of suffering caused by nerves if you read Dr. Alvarez' booklet, "Triumph Over Nervousness." Order it by sending 25 cents and a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your request for it to Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, Dept. MMT, The Register and Tribune Syndicate, Box 957, Des Moines 4, Iowa.

Seven Persons Appear in Court; Two Sentenced

Thomas Lang Johnson, 22, Grand Rapids, Mich., was sentenced in Jackson county circuit court this week to three years in the Oregon State Correctional Institution for burglary.

He had pleaded guilty earlier to breaking into Pacific Motor Trucking company building, 202 Front st., Medford, on Sept. 30.

A hearing was set in circuit court for Nov. 8, at 8:30 a.m. on charges of probation violation for James Brandel Backes, 19, of 325 Columbus st., Medford. He had been placed on probation for grand larceny.

Trial has been set for Nov. 19 for William Robert Eberhardt, 40, of 516 South Riverside ave., charge with receiving and concealing stolen property. He pleaded innocent to the charge when arraigned. He is accused of receiving knives, guns and ammunition belonging to William Bryant.

Psychiatric examinations were ordered for two men charged with sodomy. Bobby Vernon Wright, 316 Willamette st., and Donald Lee Seville, 21, of 108 South Central ave.

Imposition of sentence was suspended for three years on Hallel Howard Anderson, 18, of 230 Beatty st., Medford, for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. He was placed on probation. He had pleaded guilty to the charges earlier.

The case of Ole Thorvald Nygard, 18, of Seattle, Wash., charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor, was continued until Nov. 8 for a plea to be entered.

All but nine states end their fiscal years June 30.

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