

LETTERS TO THE LONG ISLAND EDITOR

Psychiatrists And Drugs

Psychotherapeutic drugs, a survey shows, "are grossly underutilized, resulting in unnecessary suffering and functional impairment," according to Arthur Rifkin, M.D., director of Mount Sinai's division of clinical psychopharmacological research [Letters to the Editor, Feb. 12]. Thirty-seven years of psychiatric practice in office, hospital and clinic, including five and a half years as the clinical director of Brooklyn State Hospital, lead this author to exactly the opposite conclusion.

To me, drugs are grossly and increasingly overused by psychiatrists, influenced largely by colleagues with grant-dependent careers in drug research.

For hospitalized mental patients, statistical studies show that the results of treatment today are much poorer than they were before the drugs were introduced. Other research also shows that the use of drugs with hospitalized, or posthospital, patients can, and should, be reduced markedly to minimize their emotionally obtunding effects.

The use of drugs for ambulatory patients has become almost scandalous. Such medications may be a major cause for the increasing number of "young chronics," youngsters who are psychiatrically disabled without ever having been hospitalized. A large fraction of my current practice assists overdrugged patients of all ages to reduce and then eliminate medication, so they can then regain necessary social habits and resume normal functioning.

And was almost destroyed by the drugs prescribed by a leading psychiatrist for a minor depression. The young man became almost completely paralyzed functionally, and only good fortune enabled him to escape to another city, where he has done very well in the five ensuing years.

A great variety of symptoms can be produced by conflicts within people or with those around them. Resolving such conflicts, rather than focusing on which symptom requires which drug, can help such individuals recover. Psychopharmacology today, however, resembles obstetrics in Semmelweis's time: physicians harm the patients they treat.

NATHANIEL S. LEHRMAN, M.D.

Roslyn
Clinical Director, Retired
Brooklyn State Hospital

10 NOB HILL GATE
ROSLYN, N. Y. 11576
516 - 626-0238

Dr. Lehrman is also the Chairman of the Mental Health Committee of the Humanist Society of Metropolitan New York.

Note the
date!

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