

Marlborough Night Hospital



Dr. Bierer and Miss R. Igoe, sister-in-charge, with a patient having LSD therapy.

Treatment with LSD and Group Therapy—2

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DEEPLY HIDDEN TRAUMATIC experiences are released by LSD 25 (lysergic acid diethylamide). Sometimes, puzzling experiences related by the patient can only be interpreted as being the time of his birth or even before. Releasing traumatic experiences does not by itself necessarily result in any improvement in the patient's health. The way one deals with this material in individual and group psychotherapy is the important factor in the treatment.

While some people do not react to LSD, some experience what are perhaps pure fantasies, and others relive happenings in phenomenal detail and gain deep insight into their problems. We do not know why people's reactions to this drug are so varied.

Patients treated in our Experiment

We treated 103 patients in seven groups, of which two groups are still undergoing treatment. We will

analyse the five groups which have completed the treatment only. Symptoms were as follows:

	Patients
Schizophrenia, or advanced schizoid states ..	30
Depression	10
Psychopathic personality	11
Hysteria	8
Anxiety	9
Homosexuality	7
TOTAL	75

LENGTH OF TIME SYMPTOMS HAVE BEEN EXHIBITED	
Under one year	—
Under five years	6
Five to 10 years	25
Over 10 years	24
TOTAL	55

The symptoms of 20 patients were life-long.

(cont. over)

Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) is a potent abre-active drug, particularly when used with methedrine. Although it is difficult to believe that one can recollect one's birth, the authors suggest that this in fact may happen under the influence of LSD. The importance of the nurse's approach to the patient is emphasized.

As it is not long since we completed the treatment in our groups, which contained many chronically ill people, we can claim only limited significance for our results. We shall estimate our success when we have followed them up for a sufficient period.

Patients' Reports on Experiences under LSD

1. 'I seemed to be very warm and sweating, and everything was very dark. I felt terrible pressure on my head, which then extended down my face. I felt my nose was being flattened, and my chin being pressed down against my trachea, then my shoulders seemed to be squeezed together, and a moment later I seemed to become panicky because I felt there was something I could not get through. I started kicking with my legs to free myself. I was aware of some muscular movements around me which were not my own; suddenly I seemed to be free, and the light was very bright. I still felt panicky, and very cold.

I subsequently found out that I was born as a large baby and with a large head, and that I had large bruises from pressure around my eyes. I was never aware of the mechanics of childbirth, and knew nothing about muscular movements to express the baby. I remember feeling very warm and secure before being born.

Fragments of all these odd sensations kept on coming back for days afterwards.'

Although it is difficult to believe that one can recollect one's birth, the release of such an experience seems the most likely explanation of this account. However, we cannot exclude with certainty the possibility of the account being a fantasy.

2. 'I became dreamy and had a sense of vagueness and of drifting into the distance. The group talking around me

seemed shadowy and unreal and their voices reached me as if from a very great distance like indistinct echoes.

I became strangely cold. My body became numb and I could not control any of my muscles. A vague sense of nausea developed and violent tremors set in. I did not experience any feelings of alarm or anxiety.

Everything around me seemed to become more distant and unreal and I felt that I was floating and spinning at great speed. Some force outside myself seemed to be trying to force my body to roll up into a ball. It was very strong and persistent and I could not resist it.

I went to bed and immediately my knees forced themselves upwards towards my chin, my head came down to touch my knees and somehow my arms tucked themselves up so that both closed hands rested close to chin. I felt I had become microscopically small.

Great time seemed to pass. Then I had the impression of being impelled urgently and rapidly through a long dark tube.

After passing through this tube I was conscious of being submerged in and floating through a translucent pale yellowish-green fluid. There was no discomfort or sense of alarm or anxiety about anything. Around me I saw numerous microscopic creatures. They looked a little like first-day tadpoles before the body begins to thicken; but these creatures appeared to have pointed heads.

Somehow I became aware that I was also one of these tadpole-like creatures. This intrigued me and I wondered how it was possible; also I thought how strange it was that I was able to see all these creatures without the aid of a very powerful microscope.

After drifting for some time through this yellowish-green fluid I became aware of a few of these tadpoles having developed some sort of reptilian limbs. They appeared to be attempting to climb upwards over some sort of slippery substance. They reminded me, in a vague way, of very

Patients arriving in the early evening, walking through the garden to the Marlborough Night Hospital.



minute alligators, or some kind of fish, having pointed tails and four five-fingered limbs.

My next impression was of finding myself rolled up into a ball and completely enveloped in something soft and spongy and pale-pink in colour. I felt warm and comfortable, without any sense of time and felt neither anxious nor alarmed. I felt very much at peace and completely without thoughts of anything.

After a short time I became aware of two indistinct but equally strong-willed forces having taken up positions on either side of me. They had no distinguishable shape but I sensed that the one on my left side represented the male force, and the one on my right was the female force. They were in strong conflict with each other over my body and each made determined efforts to get possession of it.

First the male force pulled my abdomen to him, only to have it snatched from him by the female force. This battle seemed to go on for a great length of time. I remember thinking that this was all very unjust since neither force had asked me which side I wanted to go to. I felt very impatient and wished they would hurry up and come to some kind of decision and leave me in peace as I was before they arrived on the scene.

I don't know what happened but suddenly I felt very unhappy because I felt that I had lost something very important to me and that the argument between these two forces had not been completely settled, nor in the way I had hoped for. I also had the curious idea that I was about to be born into the world, but I didn't want to be born.'

This patient, physically male, was determined to live as a woman, and to marry in this role. In spite of this, he undertook to cycle from Great Britain to Australia. Ignoring everybody's advice, and contrary to everyone's expectations, he did this, using the most strenuous route.

3. 'Retired to bed. Pleasant bodily sensations alternating with waves of anxiety. I seemed to get very small. My limbs became tiny. I thought I was very young and my people were around us.

They were talking about a naevus on my neck where my Adam's apple is. They were all anxious if I would be able to talk when I grew up. I do not remember having a naevus there.'

This patient had suffered from a bad stammer all his life. At the time of the LSD treatment he did not know what 'naevus' meant.

After the treatment he made inquiries and it was confirmed that when he was a small child he had a naevus removed from his neck by operation.

Role of Nurse in Psychiatric Night Hospital

As is well-known, the tendency nowadays in hospitals where modern psychiatric treatment is carried out is for responsibility to be shared between the doctor, the nurses and other staff, and even the patients. This scheme replaces the old autocratic system in which the doctor bore all the responsibility.

The status of the nurse has thus been increased and her work is now much more interesting. She has been given an important therapeutic task for which she needs an exceptionally stable and mature personality.

Throughout history, nurses have been taught not to become personally involved with their patients. Psychiatrists know that it is impossible for anyone who

The list of **Organizations for Patients**, printed in the *Nursing Times* during December 1960 and January 1961, has been reprinted in leaflet form and is available free, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

works in this field not to become involved. However, those of us with a suitable training and personality can avoid becoming too involved. We must try not to hurt the patient too much, and not to be hurt ourselves.

An example of the personal involvement necessary in psychiatric treatment is that the patient often gives the nurse the identity of the mother-image.

It would be short-sighted not to recognize this, or the fact that the training of the majority of nurses does not enable them to face this responsibility without help. Only by always working in close co-operation with the psychiatrist can the nurse deal effectively with the intricacies of this specialized role, and the potential difficulties, or even disaster, be avoided.

The way in which the nurse handles the individual patient while he is under the influence of LSD vitally affects the success of the treatment. A very special form of approach by a mature, understanding, sympathetic personality is essential.

We believe that the nurse should attend the group sessions. Unfortunately, this was not always practicable during our experiment because she had other business to attend to.

At our hospital the nurse has the unusually great responsibility of being in sole charge of the patients from 10 or 11 p.m. until 9 a.m. She has had to call the doctor, who is not on the premises, only three times because of an outbreak of violence, but future units would find it better to arrange that a professional and preferably male member of the staff is available the moment he is required.

Summary

LSD 25 was first synthesized in 1943 in the Sandoz research laboratories. Since then it has been used in this country in day-to-day practice by Sandison at Powick Hospital, by Martin at Marlborough Day Hospital, and by Ling at Roffey Park.

An experiment using LSD and methedrine followed by individual and group psychotherapy was recently carried out at Marlborough Night Hospital; 103 patients took part in this experiment. We found that LSD and group psychotherapy are an effective combination and that each enhances the other's values.

Psychotics, psychopaths and patients with disintegrated personalities can be treated without undue risk in a part-time hospital with this method, possibly omitting individual psychotherapy.

We hope that part-time psychiatric hospitals will eventually obviate the necessity for any psychopath to become an in-patient in a mental hospital.