

as a result of deprivation of social contact but merely suppressed and can be learned under carefully selected and controlled conditions. One of these involves the use of younger, surrogate-peer-reared 'therapist' monkeys who have not yet learned those aggressive responses emitted by older monkeys which Harlow predicts have impeded attempts at habilitation.

I hope these additional references will enable readers to put Harlow's work into a different perspective from that one gets from reading his early work.

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TOXIC REACTIONS TO LITHIUM AND NEUROLEPTICS

DEAR SIR,

Toxic neurological reactions to combined lithium/haloperidol treatment was first reported by Cohen and Cohen, 1974 (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, **230**, 1283) and Loudon and Waring, 1976 (*Lancet*, *ii*, 1088), especially at high serum lithium levels and high doses of haloperidol. Thomas also reported (*Journal*, May 1979, **134**, 552) a further case differing in that the patient had experienced previous treatment with lithium/haloperidol combination without developing toxic side-effects. A similar syndrome was recorded by West, 1977 (*British Medical Journal*, *ii*, 642) after exposure to lithium/flupenthixol combination.

I would like to report a case of toxic reaction to combined treatment with lithium and fluphenazine:

A 25-year-old man with a manic episode and a seven-year history of manic-depressive psychosis was given fluphenazine, 75 mg in a single i.m. dose which was repeated one week later. In addition, patient was receiving chlorpromazine, 300 mg and trihexiphenidyl ('Artane'), 5 mg daily. Haloperidol drops were given eventually and

for a few days in a maximum dose 2.5 mg/day. Lithium treatment was started 10 days after the second administration of fluphenazine and more than 10 days after the last administration of haloperidol, with 900 mg lithium carbonate daily, giving serum level 0.9 mEq/l. Four days after starting lithium treatment the patient developed tremulousness, rigidity, dysarthria, ataxia, tiredness, vomiting and confusion. Serum lithium level was 1.0 mEq/l. Lithium and chlorpromazine were stopped and 'Artane', 30 mg/day and 'Disipal', 12 mg/day, were given without any significant effect. The patient gradually improved and became functional after two months, with no clear evidence of organic brain damage.

One month later he became hypomanic and lithium treatment was attempted again starting with low doses (300 mg) and progressively increasing to 1800 mg/day, in addition to chlorpromazine, 300 mg/day. No side effects were noted, while serum level was 0.86 mEq/l. In previous episodes the patient had been treated with large doses of neuroleptics (chlorpromazine, 900 mg, haloperidol, 30 mg daily and fluphenazine, 75 mg/week) without exhibiting side-effects.

The case suggests that the toxic reaction was due to lithium-fluphenazine interaction, as previous treatment with neuroleptics and subsequent treatment with lithium and chlorpromazine, but without fluphenazine, did not produce adverse effects. Haloperidol, given in a small total dose long before lithium administration seems not to account for the side-effects observed.

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INFORMAL PATIENTS DETAINED

DEAR SIR,

The analysis of compulsory admissions by Elliott, Timbury and Walker (*Journal*, August 1979, **135**, 104-14) gives only a partial picture of the implementation of Section 31, the emergency Section. While the authors refer to "a three-fold increase in the use" of powers to detain informally admitted patients they omit the precise figures for these cases. A recent unpublished study by me at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital revealed that of 100 consecutive Section 31 applications, 38 were in respect of resident patients. If this use of the Act were included in the Gartnavel study, the mean annual figure of 71.6 Section 31s, which the authors reported, would undoubtedly be very much higher.

The use of 2nd, 3rd and 4th Section 31s in 10 per cent of the 1962-72 cohort is worrying and is clearly at variance with the intention of the lawmakers. The consequence is that patients are detained for 14, 21 or

28 days on the authority of only one doctor (not necessarily a consultant), without right of appeal and without the requirement of sheriff's approval. The detention might be clinically appropriate, but it seems to lay the doctor open to accusations of not acting within the spirit of the law.

Finally the authors' comment regarding Section 31, that they "have not found published evidence of dissatisfaction" is a spurious and ostrich-like defence. The very existence of serious mental disorder is likely to impair the motivation, ability and sophistication of an individual, so that he may find it difficult to voice his complaints in a manner which would lead to 'published evidence'. Indeed it is precisely for this reason that the Mental Welfare Commission exists in Scotland. This body has a legal duty to monitor the implementation of Section 24. However it is my understanding (and I would welcome correction) that data are not automatically sent to the Mental Welfare Commission on the use of consecutive Section 31s which do not lead to a Section 24, nor on the use of Section 31s for informally admitted residents. If this is the case there would seem to be a strong argument for its correction.

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DEAR SIR,

The strike of Local Authority Social Workers which took place at the end of 1978 and the beginning of 1979, whatever the problems it caused afforded an opportunity to examine some aspects of the workings of the Mental Health Act 1959 (Review of the Mental Health Act, 1959. Command 7320, 1978. HMSO). It would be anticipated, and observation would suggest, that the number of compulsory admissions to hospital would fall.

Statistics were obtained for compulsory and informal admissions to Middlewood Hospital from the Sheffield area for the months of October to January inclusive for the years 1976-7, 1977-8 and 1978-9. Figures were also obtained for the number of patients admitted informally who were made the subject of a detention order *during their period of admission* over the same three periods. The data was examined using the Chi squared test, partitioning the overall Chi squared according to a method described by Maxwell, 1961 (*Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Methuen) to check that observed differences related to the relevant changes in circumstances. There was a significant drop in compulsory admissions. (a. and b. Chi squared overall 11.771 df 2 P <0.01: 1976 and

1977 vs 1978 9.255 df 1 P <0.01) and a rise in

| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | Total |
|-----------------|------|------|------|-------|
| a. Section | 113 | 91 | 54 | 258 |
| b. Informal | 484 | 493 | 424 | 1401 |
| c. Regraded | 44 | 37 | 70 | 151 |
| d. Not regarded | 440 | 456 | 354 | 1250 |

compulsory detention of informal patients in the relevant period (c. Chi squared overall 21.408 df 2 P <0.001: 1976 and 1977 vs 1978 20.769 df 1 P <0.001) but the total number of patients who were detained compulsorily at some time during their stay in hospital did not change significantly. (Chi squared does not attain 0.05 level).

| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | Total |
|---------------|------|------|------|-------|
| Detainees | 157 | 12 | 124 | 409 |
| Not detained | 440 | 456 | 354 | 1250 |
| TOTAL = a + b | 597 | 584 | 478 | 1659 |

Thus it appears that at least in the Sheffield area it has been possible to admit significantly fewer patients compulsorily than was the practice in the past, as has been suggested by those apprehensive about the workings of the Mental Health Act 1959. However the figures relating to the subsequent imposition of compulsory detention on informal patients suggest that, at least numerically, the increase in this practice balances almost exactly the fall in initial compulsion. Of course it is not necessarily the same individuals who will be affected.

If it is accepted that the overall infliction of compulsory detention is constant and if the general principle that such detention is necessary at times is also accepted, there remains the problem of when compulsion should be applied. We suggest that the present findings imply that undue initial reluctance to use compulsion may result in its subsequent imposition in circumstances which may lead patients to feel that they have been misled. It is perhaps a matter for the individual psychiatrist to decide which approach is the more acceptable but it means that this is a dilemma which is unlikely to be resolved by regulation.

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