

In conclusion, though we have not carried out a controlled trial, our not inconsiderable clinical experience over five years confirms that brain polarization is extremely valuable in certain kinds of patient very difficult to handle by other means. This opinion is shared by the patients, their relatives and the nursing staff. As you recently pointed out (*Journal*, July, p. 119), 'No useful method of treatment was ever yet discovered in a strictly controlled trial, but such trials have their place when the exploratory work has been done.' We believe that Dr. Arfai and his colleagues took insufficient notice on the preliminary studies in planning their trial.

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## RESULTS OF SYSTEMATIC DESENSITIZATION WITH PHOBIAS RE-EXAMINED

DEAR SIR,

N. McConaghy (*Journal*, July 1970, p. 89-92), suggests that in some reports of controlled studies of phobic subjects valuable therapeutic effects have been ignored because they did not reach statistical significance. It might be worth pointing out that statistics are sometimes useful in such studies inasmuch as they help the investigator distinguish between conclusions which may be correctly drawn from the results and those which may not. One advantage of the statistical treatment reported in the papers of Gelder, Marks, Cooper and others is that the reader can infer with confidence that the 'trend', to which McConaghy refers, for more subjects to show marked improvement with desensitization than with control procedures is nothing more than an interesting pointer to a future study designed specifically to test its importance. An appropriate null hypothesis might be that the trend reflects

only chance factors and is not an effect of desensitization; published reports do not contradict this hypothesis.

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## SHORTCOMINGS OF SCIENTIFIC PSYCHIATRY

DEAR SIR,

We regret that the brevity which we thought appropriate in reporting the negative results of our study of LSD treatment in alcoholism and neurosis (*Journal*, April 1970, 116, 443-5), has given Dr. E. K. Ledermann (*Journal*, June 1970, 116, 680) the impression that we had to be impersonal in striving for objectivity, since the facts were quite otherwise.

The therapist met each patient and described the purpose and method of the experiment in full before inviting his participation. Treatments were given in pleasant surroundings, each room being decorated with flowers and equipped with a phonograph and records. A nurse remained with the patient throughout each session, and the therapist made frequent visits to discuss his reactions to the drug. We are well aware of the possible complications of treatment with lysergide (Denson, 1969), and the therapist accepted personal responsibility for the safety of each patient during the session and the following week; contact was maintained by telephone and home visits.

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate what we and our colleagues had believed to be a therapeutic effect of LSD treatment (Smith 1959; Jensen, 1962; Denson, 1966), and it was undertaken with much enthusiasm. Our negative findings have been a source of personal disappointment and we can readily understand the sentiments which motivated Dr. Ledermann's communication. If he and his associates at the Marlborough Day Hospital can succeed where we have failed we shall be delighted to acknowledge their achievement.

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