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## **Minnesota Bedlam**

### **State Put to Shame by U.S. Mental Care**

*This is the ninth of a series of stories describing conditions in Minnesota mental hospitals. Geri Hoffner, Tribune writer, and Arthur Hager, Tribune photographer, visited all of the seven state hospitals.*

By Geri Hoffner, Minneapolis Tribune Staff Writer

Minnesota's mentally sick veteran gets every chance for recovery that modern psychiatry and medicine can provide.

At the veterans administration hospital in St. Cloud, he is kept so busy with a variety of treatments that he has little time left for brooding about his problems.

Even so, doctors at the hospital claim the patient is not kept busy enough. They believe that every minute of the day must be planned to help the sick veteran get well.

#### **"Encourages, Dismays"**

With doctors at St. Cloud hospital, "total push" treatment is a success only when it "pushes the veteran out of the hospital, a well-man."

We spent a day at the VA hospital after having visited state mental institutions.

The difference between the facilities and treatment provided by federal and state governments was both encouraging and dismaying.

It was encouraging to find modern, cheerfully-furnished buildings with the modern equipment needed in treating mind sickness; it was encouraging to see doctors, nurses, attendants, social workers, psychologists--neat, efficient personnel working as a team.

But it was dismaying to realize how much must be done to bring Minnesota's hospitals up to the requirements of modern mental hospitals.

#### **More Money Spent**

The single, most important difference between our state hospitals and the institution at St. Cloud is that the federal government spends at least \$4 more per patient each day.

More money means more staff.

The St. Cloud hospital has two full-time dentists, two full-time clinical psychologists, three psychiatric social workers.

It employs a head dietician, two assistant dieticians, 37 occupational therapists, 70 graduate nurses and approximately 345 attendants.

Six psychiatrists are on duty and the army has 21 physicians “stationed” at the hospital. Five consultants from University of Minnesota visit the hospital at least once every two weeks and are paid \$100 each for the one day’s service.

### **Food Is Better**

More money also means better food.

Approximately 78 cents a day is spent for each patient’s food (compared with about 25 cents in the state hospitals). Broiled fish, baked ham, veal chops and roasts are appetizingly prepared and served cafeteria style.

We saw malted milk being made in a large machine; we saw pies and cakes and custards, oranges, grapefruits and apples.

Treatments at the hospital include electro shock and insulin shock. To help keep the patient calm and unafraid, both treatments are given on an individual basis in a room away from other patients. Recorded music and psychotherapy also help to relax the patient.

Hydrotherapy--the use of special tubs and lukewarm sheets--is used extensively with disturbed patients. We saw a large swimming pool where 18 of the most violent patients swim and splash for hours.

The scientific use of water has been one factor in keeping St. Cloud’s restraint rate at less than six for a total patient population of 1,385.

### **3 Types of Treatment**

Heat lamps, ultra violet rays and steam baths can be used to quiet disturbed and over-active patients, too. At the veterans’ hospital, 12 technicians administer about 4,500 such treatments monthly.

One of the largest treatment programs is in occupational therapy, manual arts therapy and educational retraining.

Almost every patient at the hospital is reached by one of these three types of treatment. In occupational therapy, patients do rug weaving, basket making, wood working and other types of work. The emphasis is not on what the patient does to the project on which he is working, but what the project does for him.

Psychiatrists believe the work can help him forget his fears and worries and give him the satisfaction that comes with work well done.

The manual therapy program provides courses in radio and electricity, auto mechanics, shoe repair and agriculture. We saw patients described as “suicidal” working at complicated machines. The therapist in charge told us that in the year the program has been offered, there have been no accidents.

### **Training Valuable**

Many patients who work in the manual therapy shop are able to qualify for better jobs when leaving the hospital as a result of the training received there.

Educational retraining is offered to the patient approaching complete recovery in an effort to interest him in completing high school work or in enrolling in a course that will be of practical value when he is discharged from the hospital.

There are 188 correspondence and self-teaching courses, plus classes in typewriting, nature study, and current events.

Under the special services department, patients have ward parties, dances, smokers, card parties, USO shows and band concerts. Sports, including bowling, volleyball, baseball, tennis, and basketball, are provided for patients physically able to participate.

Extensive use is made of volunteer agencies and the voluntary service of individuals who wish to contribute time to the hospital.

### **Other Inducements**

Higher salaries paid to VA employees undoubtedly help in recruiting more and better personnel than is found in our state hospitals. Attendants start at \$1,822 a year; nurses are paid a beginning wage of \$2,644 and social workers start at \$3,397.

But there are inducements other than higher salaries to attract qualified people. There are well organized programs for attendants and nurses. Certificates are given after the training is completed and attendants are called psychiatric aids.

Working conditions are pleasant. The hospital has a substantial medical library. Psychologists, social workers and other staff members can request special journals.

Dormitories are bright and airy. Patients have metal cabinets in which to keep personal belongings. Leather furniture and comfortable chairs are provided in the recreation rooms and on the porches. All wards have radios, many of which have been contributed by volunteer groups.

Most of the staff members live in St. Cloud. A few attendants live in Quonset huts set on the hospital grounds.

### **Take Pride in Work**

It is reasonable to assume, too, that the amount of treatment going on at the hospital is another important factor in hiring personnel. The VA institution at St. Cloud is a hospital in every sense of the word. Employees can take pride in working there.

In addition to the hospital at St. Cloud, the VA provides an out-patient clinic, many veterans never have to go to the St. Cloud hospital.

The VA also provides a psychiatric specialist, with headquarters at Fort Snelling, who travels throughout the state to assist local job training officers with the special problems of employed veterans who have nervous disorders.

Some of the vocational guidance also is given at the St. Cloud hospital. Patients who are being prepared for discharge are interviewed by a VA vocational adviser who discusses job possibilities or schooling to fit the individual case.

**Could Follow Lead**

This counseling is tied in with the hospital's occupational therapy program and is carried out with the full co-operation of the patient's doctor. This helps to speed the patient's recovery by setting him to thinking about his future.

A number of staff members in our state hospitals object to comparing the state institutions with the VA hospitals. They claim the VA hospital gets a different type of patient and gets him earlier in his illness.

This may be true. And it may account for the fact that the St. Cloud hospital discharges five patients as cured for everyone it must re-admit.

Nevertheless, state hospitals could follow the VA's lead in what can be done for the mentally ill patient.

With more money to buy equipment and services, Minnesota's mental institutions might rival the VA in a modern, scientific approach to mind sickness.

Monday: Officials of the state division of institutions tell plans for improvements.