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Mr. Knack
Mrs. Nethery

Dr. E. J. Engberg, Superintendent
Faribault State Hospital

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

TO: All Medical Services Division Institutions August 1, 1967
Attention: Medical Directors
Administrators
Nursing Directors
Rehabilitation Therapies Directors

DPW Cabinet

Mental Health Medical Policy Committee

FROM: David J. Vail, M. D.
Medical Director

SUBJECT: Doman-Delacato Treatment

Dr. Lloyd Harris, a member of the Mental Health Medical Policy Committee was kind enough to send me the recently issued Joint Executive Board Statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Neurology, concerning the so-called Doman-Delacato Treatment. This statement appeared in Volume 17 of Neurology, the issue of July, 1967. I think the statement speaks for itself.

DJV:rcj
Enclosure

Joint Executive Board Statement

American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Neurology

DOMAN-DELACATO TREATMENT OF NEUROLOGICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

During the past few years, many articles have appeared in lay newspapers and magazines throughout the country, some claiming success, regarding methods for treatment of "brain damaged children" conducted by the *Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential* located in Philadelphia.

The Institute's program, and the methods utilized in the program, are described in an article by R. J. Doman, et al, which appeared in the September 17, 1960 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (174 JAMA 257). The article points out that the "preliminary results of the study were found encouraging."

With the exception of this article, as far as we know, the scientific press has been silent.

The widespread publicity generated by the Doman-Delacato program, and requests for an evaluation of the program have prompted this joint statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Neurology.

Studies Not Available

To our knowledge, no controlled studies are available to support the greater value claimed for the program as compared with conventional treatment of the neurologically handicapped child. Without such studies, a medically acceptable evaluation is not thought possible.

However, because of the demanding nature of the program and its seemingly unreserved promise of benefit, it is important that some preliminary opinion be passed which may be of assistance to our members pending a more definitive and accurate appraisal, now long overdue. In our judgment, there are several factors to be noted:

First, varying degrees of progress are made in the handicapped from maturation. In addition, individual attention and care, and physiotherapy techniques offer some benefits (though quite limited in many cases). Some of the improvements noted in Doman-Delacato treated cases may accrue from these factors.

Second, physicians should be aware of the sacrifices which a family must make in order to participate in this program. Success or failure largely devolves on parents to follow a regimen which, if taken literally, is extremely demanding. Failure, therefore, may implicate parents in the ultimate outcome. The demands on the family to sacrifice untold time and energy and to create obligations on volunteer assistants, not to mention cost and transportation burdens, are factors to be weighed particularly when the point is made that "nothing to date has helped and if it can do no harm, let's give it a try."

Evaluation Needed

Third, more than five years have passed since the publication of the preliminary results of the studies of the program. Granted, the necessary controlled studies are fraught with great difficulty. Matching cases at the outset of treatment is open to considerable error. Controlling variables likely to affect the outcome in some way is extremely difficult. Recording data uniformly and judging outcome as it pertains to the host of phenomena involved, presents a challenge to the serious investigator. But whatever the reason, the absence of an acceptable evaluation of the program after such a period of time is a disservice to the program if, in fact, it is responsible for the successes claimed for it.

Fourth, individual members report they have been informed of cases in which the Doman-Delacato program appears not to have helped the patient.

The Executive Boards of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Neurology, acting jointly, feel, therefore, that physicians should make their decisions and recommendations for management of the neurologically handicapped child on the basis that there is as yet no firm evidence substantiating the claims made for the Doman-Delacato methods and program. What is needed are well controlled studies by recognized experts.