

Complete text

VI LSD No.132 (§102a)

M 349 mental defectives

M 324 memory

M 329 suggestibility

M 398 psychotherapy

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Lysergic acid in mental deficiency.

Lancet 269, 1090 (1955).

Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD25) was used as an adjunct in the psychotherapeutic treatment of chronic anxiety tension and obsessional neuroses by Sandison et al.¹ Their work led us to treat similarly a series of 16 mental defectives whose symptoms and history suggested that their failure of intellectual and social development may have been due, in no small part, to emotional factors operating during development.

The drug was given orally in doses of from 20 to 400 µg. in distilled water and was found to stimulate the memories of these patients, but the abreactive effects were limited and in spite of fairly prolonged periods of treatment—up to 26 treatments in three months—no lasting benefit has been observed.

In 7 instances the patients were more talkative and cooperative for a few days after the treatment but relapsed quite quickly. The majority experienced physical symptoms such as flushing of the face and limbs, tingling in the arms and legs, choking in the throat, and constriction of the chest.

The bizarre hallucinatory experiences recorded by others were noted in only 2 of our 16 cases and in these they were much simpler in character and may well have been the result of inadvertent suggestion on the part of the staff. It was observed that under LSD25, most of our patients were easily influenced by suggestion. This may be of therapeutic value rather than a disadvantage.

No instances of post-LSD depression occurred and only 2 patients were apprehensive or fearful during treatment. The majority looked forward to it, possibly because of the increased amount of attention which they received from the staff during this period.

Our impression is that while the effects of lysergic acid on mental defectives is to stimulate the memory, the general pattern of the resulting experiences is of a very simple order; but is of value as an aid in the psychotherapeutic approach to such cases.

1. Sandison, R. A., Spencer, A. M., Whitelaw, J. D. *J. ment. Sci.* 1954, 100, 491. Sandison, R. A. *Ibid.*, p. 508.