

# A Unique Mental Health Clinic And a Case of Life or Death

(Editor's note: This is the last in a series of four articles on the local mental health picture.)

By RALPH GOMPERTZ  
Managing Editor

Mental illness is getting the better of us. Every other hospital bed is occupied by a mental case.

Mental illness has been called the nation's number one health problem.

While the needs for coping with this problem are increasing at a frightening pace, the available staff and facilities are tragically decreasing in proportion.

Something has to be done and in recent years, a growing interest has been shown in dealing with this problem.

There are many ways in which the problem of mental illness is being tackled.

All of them, however, involve two facets: prevention and cure.

Prevention, of course, is the only hope of curbing the angry sea of emotional disturbances and the towering tidal waves of mental illness.

While the problem of mental illness is being fought on many fronts, a unique experiment is being tried in the Torrance area whose success or failure may have far-reaching effects shortly on the whole mental health picture in California.

Three years ago a mental health clinic was set up in San Pedro. It was established to serve 22 surrounding communities. One out of every five individuals who have made

use of the clinic comes from Torrance.

This year the State legislature decided to use the local clinic as a pilot clinic.

The State wants to see if such a clinic can be run on a cooperative basis. The State will pay \$52,000 to cover the cost of professional staff. But it will be up to the Community to raise enough money for maintenance expenses.

If the Harbor District Mental Health Service proves successful, other clinics like it may be set up in other communities throughout the state.

There is no one who has been more concerned over the development and success of the clinic than Mrs. Lillie Walsworth, coordinator for the Mental Health Service.

Mrs. Walsworth, who has given 25 years of her life to social work, worked hard to establish the local clinic and has worked untiringly as its coordinator for the last three years since it was founded.

She has been assisted by Mrs. Edna Hainline. The Harbor Area Mental Health Service, which is located at 731 S. Beacon street, San Pedro (TE 2-6464), is staffed by members of the Los Angeles State Mental Hygiene Clinic.

For the last three years the local clinic was only open one day a week.

However, as a result of the State appropriations, the clinic will now be open full-time. The additional staff, made available through the Los Angeles State Mental Hygiene Clinic, will divide its services between the San Pedro clinic and the Long Beach clinic.

While both clinics are pilot clinics, the San Pedro one is unique in the sense that it is an all-purpose clinic.

This means that the patient is not only treated individually, but his immediate family, relatives, or friends are brought into the picture at the same time.

Will the 22 local communities make good in supporting their clinic?

Even now the Mental Health Service's activities are being threatened because of insufficient funds for badly needed additional telephones.

These phones are needed to enable the clinic to change over to a full-time basis.

"We need \$150 in order to install the phones which are urgently needed at this time because school sessions are starting and demands for service are increasing," Mrs. Walsworth said.

What might otherwise be a minor expenditure becomes a major obstacle because of the precarious financial position the community clinic finds itself in.

Unfortunately, as regards community support of

## Dear Editor

Mental Health Problem

Torrance Press:  
Editor,

I feel that newspapers are to be commended for taking such an active interest in the mental health problem.

Most of our citizens read the newspaper and very few of them read the special magazines and journals which usually contain such articles.

Therefore, it is obvious that public education is best served through the newspaper field.

During the past few years, we have witnessed very encouraging experiences in the field of mental health. The interest of the general citizenry has increased.

Many of our prejudices against mental illness have disappeared or are disappearing.

There has been a great rejuvenation of scientific interest also, and the problem is receiving very intensive study by our best minds.

It is my belief that with this intense research and study and improvements in general attitudes of the public that we will witness many notable improvements in the diagnosis, care, and treatment of the mentally and emotionally ill and handicapped within the next few years.

Our Department of Mental Hygiene has placed research at the top of the priority list. I believe that our care and treatment program compares very favorably with that found in the best institutions throughout the country.

This does not mean that we have reached the ideal and that we can rest content, since there is much about mental health which we still do not know and there is a great scarcity of trained personnel which is needed to carry out those things which we already know.

Sincerely yours,  
(s) Walter Rapaport, M.D.  
Director of Mental Hygiene, State of California



MRS. LILLIE WALSWORTH  
... health center coordinator

the clinic, Torrance has a shameful record. While one out of every five patients at the clinic is from Torrance, no noticeable organized attempt has been made here to support the clinic.

The one major exception is the National Supply company which has helped consistently from year to year through its Employee Welfare Fund.

If the pilot clinic proves successful, it will still be necessary to obtain State legislation putting such a clinic on a permanent basis.

That will be the real test for there are those who will oppose such legislation loudly and vigorously.

And so the fight against the terrors of mental illness continues, as it has for generations and centuries. It is a fight over men's minds for the welfare of men's minds.

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