

Tranquillising Drugs

IN your daily paper you may have noticed references to new drugs called tranquillisers, and to their beneficial use in certain mental diseases and in breakdown or borderline states of restlessness and anxiety. These drugs have been developed in the last 20 years. The last World War brought early ones into prominence. They were the antihistamines, discovered to have a quietening effect and to act specifically against motion sickness.

Since then experimentation has gone on apace, using fish, insects such as spiders, bigger animals like monkeys, and finally man himself. Monkeys easily get worked up and fly into rages, so they were used to test the quietening effect of proposed new drugs. Lions and other fierce animals could be made easy to handle. Mental stress was deliberately induced in animals and new drugs used to overcome it. For example, cats were taught to release a food pellet into a box by means of a switch placed within the cage. A hungry trained animal will press the switch, walk to the box, open its lid, eat the food pellet, go back to the switch, operate it and so on until its hunger is satisfied. This feeding habit being well established, stress is created by introducing a disturbing influence, a blast of air, just at the moment when the animal opens the box to take a food pellet. The cat now has increasing mental stress. There is conflict between the old feeding habit and the newly introduced fear of the feeding box. A new drug to allay the conflict is now tried out. By such time-consuming experiments drugs have emerged which can diminish, or at times completely

This is the text of a talk on health, broadcast recently from ZB, ZA, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

abolish, the conflict-induced anxiety state. When tested out on man, some but not all, have worked to allay mental conflicts, to tide over periods of stress and strain, and be beneficial in treating certain types of mental disease.

From many clinical trials certain of these tranquillising drugs are building up a sphere of usefulness. The anxiety and restlessness of certain mental diseases are effectively controlled by drugs like chlorpromazine and reserpine. Benactyzine relieves states of restlessness and anxiety caused by stresses and strains or the conflicts of daily living. These drugs are taking the place of brain surgery for the relief of certain kinds of mental illness. Their sphere is only in the developmental stage as yet, but because of their effectiveness in some patients, their use is sweeping round the world.

Of course, these tranquillising drugs are being tried out for many conditions. They are going through a phase reminiscent of the antibiotics. The World Health Organisation has had to take note of the rapidly increasing use of tranquillisers, and warn all countries that they are potentially habit-forming. Obviously, if your doctor uses such drugs to tide you over some emotional or stress or conflict period in your life, you are going to be biased towards their use in a future strain situation. But you should try to overcome your

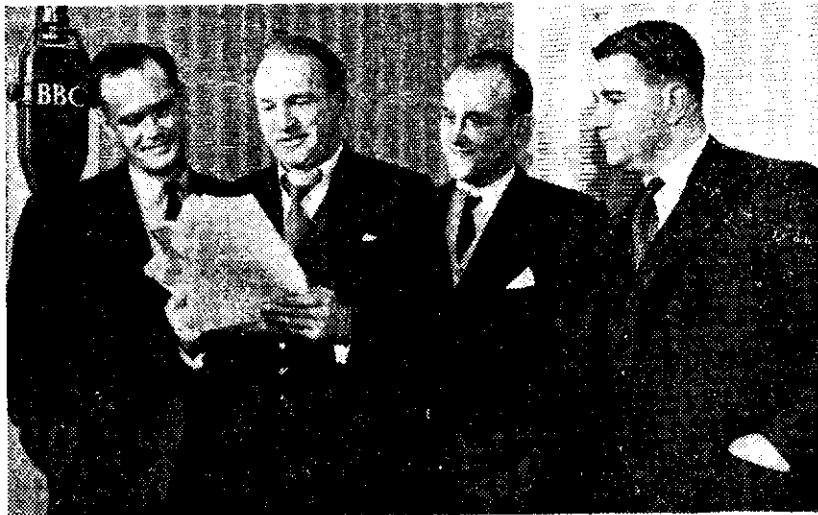
conflicts and stresses without drugs, and leave these new tranquillisers to their proper use in mental troubles, and situations where the doctor judges their use to be indicated. Please refrain from putting pressure on your doctor to prescribe tranquillising drugs.

Their repeated use will create a desire to continue taking them for the sense of improved well-being derived from them. You will slowly tend to lean on them in trouble. You will go in for repeated consumption of the tranquilliser. You will form a drug habit. Ultimately your health will be detrimentally affected, for these drugs are not meant to be used excessively or over unduly long periods.

I'm afraid some of you must already be addicts to barbiturates, which are also used for soothing and for sleeplessness. I'm afraid you dun your doc-

tor for these. Some of you must, for one in every seven prescriptions contains a barbiturate. Some of you go from doctor to doctor, telling your story of woe, until you get the desired barbiturate. Doctors shouldn't give in to you, and you should get yourself out of this drug habit. Ultimately not only physical but moral health deteriorates if you become a barbiturate habitue. Taken with alcohol the danger is decidedly greater. Over 14 per cent of all prescriptions in New Zealand are for barbiturates.

If you are helping this unhealthy pile-up, please pull yourself up. Leaning on drugs is not the way to health. And don't repeat the mistake with the new tranquillising drugs whose potentialities are not yet fully known, except that they are likely to outdo the barbiturates in developing devotees.



BBC photograph

ROMANCE and reality are blended in an unusual combination in the BBC play to be heard from the YAs and 4YZ on Monday, July 29. The events of *The Final Test* are fictitious, presenting the story of a veteran cricketer who plays for his country for the last time. But in the performance several prominent personalities are heard as themselves, among them the cricketers Brian Close (Yorkshire), Frank Tyson (Northamptonshire) and Colin Cowdrey (Kent), shown left to right in the photograph above, with Patrick Barr (second from left), who plays the leading role of Sam Palmer. Other familiar

THE FINAL TEST

voices are those of the BBC commentators Rex Alston, Brian Johnston, and John Arlott; C. Day Lewis (who reads poetry in one of the amusing incidents attributed to the BBC Third Programme), Frank Phillips, Michael Brooke, and Christopher Pemberton. *The Final Test* is Sam Palmer's last appearance on the field, and he is bitterly disappointed that his son Reggie (Ray Jackson) will not come to watch, but prefers to go and meet his hero, Alexander Whitehead, a poet and gramatist (George Benson). Sam is consoled by the sympathetic barmaid at the Stag and Hounds, Cora (Brenda Bruce), but his major consolation comes after Reggie discovers that Alexander Whitehead's ruling passion is cricket, and that Sam Palmer was his boyhood hero. Royston Morley produced the play, which was adapted for radio by Cynthia Fughe from the story by Terence Rattigan, the author of *The Sleeping Prince* and *The Deep Blue Sea*.

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 26, 1957.

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