THE DURATION OF HOSPITAL LIFE FOR MENTAL PATIENTS
(SECOND PAPER)
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Study of the Occurrence and Social Significance of Mental Diseases in New York State

Fifty-one per cent of first admissions to the civil State hospitals of New York have less than a year's total residence in these institutions, while 13 per cent are in hospital 16 years or longer.

Of the patients with less than a year's duration of hospital life, to use fractional terms, about four-eighths are discharged as recovered, much improved, or improved; about three-eighths of this number die in hospital; while about one-eighth of the same group, including those transferred out of the hospital system or deported to other states or countries, are discharged as unimproved.

At the end of 16 years of observation, nearly 35 per cent of the original group of first admissions have been discharged as recovered, much improved, or improved; about 7.5 per cent as unimproved; while slightly over 42 per cent have died in hospital. Nearly 16 per cent are in hospital walls at the end of this period, most of them having been there all or practically all of the time, except possibly for a few months.

Roughly, therefore, out of each 100 first admissions, the distribution of the group by outcome, on the basis of 16 years of observation, is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discharged, with favorable outcome</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharged, unimproved</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died in hospital</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In hospital at end of period</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A research project conducted under the auspices of the State Charities Aid Association in collaboration with the State Department of Mental Hygiene. Dr. Horatio M. Pollock, Director of the Statistical Bureau of the Department, is serving the study as consultant.

2. The foregoing statements as to outcome refer to the condition on discharge from the last residence which the patient had in any civil State hospital within the period of observation. As shown in a previous article (Fuller, R. G., Readmissions in the Hospital History of Mental Patients During Eighteen Years Following First Admission, PSYCHIATRIC QUARTERLY, January, 1931) dealing with readmissions among the same group of patients as are here considered, slightly over 87 per cent of first admissions have only one residence.
The average duration of hospital life of mental patients is 49.2 months, but comparatively few cases cluster around this average duration. The median duration of hospital life is only 11.4 months, which is the time spent in hospital walls by the middle patient in the series of all patients considered. Half of the patients are in hospital less than 11.4 months, and for them the average duration is 3.7 months. For the other half the average is 99.6 months.

These findings are the result of an analysis of the hospital histories of all patients with mental disease admitted to the civil State hospitals during a two-year period. Significant variations by sex and psychosis will be shown in the following pages. We shall also present corresponding data relating to first admissions during later periods. The duration study as a whole, therefore, refers to the hospital histories of all first admissions to civil State hospitals during three periods of two years each.¹

These three periods (hereinafter called "selection periods") are as follows: October 1, 1909 to September 30, 1911; October 1, 1914 to September 30, 1916; and October 1, 1919 to September 30, 1921. The number of patients admitted in the first period is 11,050; in the second, 12,550; in the third, 13,473; in all three together, 37,073.

To repeat, in substance, the explanation of method contained in our preliminary article on the duration of hospital life for mental patients,² it may be said that the histories were followed, in each case, from date of first admission up to and including June 30, 1928, by reference to the card records on file in the Statistical Bureau of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene. For purposes of clarity in the presentation of data, however, the duration of hospital life of patients whose first admissions occurred in the first selection period is shown for a maximum of exactly 16 years; of patients first admitted in the second selection period, for a maximum of exactly 11 years; and of patients who entered hospital for the first time during the third selection period, for a maximum of exactly 6 years.

1. Omitting the small number who were diagnosed as "not insane" or "without psychosis."
2. Fuller, R. G., and Johnston, Mary. The Duration of Hospital Life for Mental Patients (Preliminary Paper), Psychiatric Quarterly, April, 1931