Closed-circuit television has been found effective under a wide range of applications. This study reports on its use in the therapy of the mentally ill. Gaither Lee Martin, postgraduate student at San Jose State College (California) and professional intern at Agnews State Hospital, was the originator of and principal investigator for the research program. Charles H. R. Over, postgraduate student and professional intern, was the co-investigator. The research was conducted at Agnews State Hospital, Agnew, California, under the direction of Hyman Tucker, MD, superintendent and medical director of the hospital, and under the auspices of the Psychology Department, San Jose State College.

A method of communication for purposes of sharing and transmitting information between therapist and patient has been one of several major problems in dealing effectively with the mentally ill. The paramount why of mental illness is at this time unknown, but the how of mental illness has been approached with fair success through the use of new drugs and treatments, and a greater understanding of the mentally ill person through research in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social science, biochemistry, physiology, and other allied fields. The problems of how to deliver the therapies and treatments developed by the various disciplines to more than a few select patients; how to use the limited professional personnel prepared to deliver such therapies to the greatest number of persons; and how to carry on a broad program of treatment, education, and rehabilitation economically within the reach of all mental institutions were the subjects of several studies begun in the spring of 1952 at Agnews State Hospital, Agnew, California.

There was evidence as early as 1952, when five television sets were installed in various wards of the hospital, that patients
responded favorably to commercial television programs. In the words of Agnes Elmer, Superintendent of Nursing Services of Agnews, "... disturbed patients became quiet and attentive; destructive patients became absorbed in the programs instead of tearing clothing and destroying furniture." Radio sets, which had been used in the wards for a number of years, had very little effect on patient behavior; thus, the response of these patients to television caused much speculation among some of the hospital personnel. It would seem that the patients responded favorably to the visual impact of television as opposed to the "anonymous messages and disembodied voices" of radio. The patients seemed to identify with the television performers, as Ruesch (2:13) explains, "... communication is the matrix in which all human activities are embedded. In practice, communication links object to person and person to person; and scientifically speaking, this interrelatedness is understood best in terms of systems of communication." If the medium of television could be used to "link person to person" as in the case of mental illness—the therapist to the patient—then the problem of reaching a large number of patients with limited personnel might be solved.

A review of the literature reported no previous research in this area. Therefore, in May 1953 a pilot study was conducted which served as a first step in a long-range investigation. One ward was observed daily for a period of six weeks in order to note the patients' reactions to commercial television programs. Many patients appeared to respond with a broad range of behavior reactions: a number of patients would sit and talk to the performers, usually the newscasters, for long periods of time; some of these patients were normally uncommunicative to anyone. Other patients would imitate performers, especially dancers. Most of the patients appeared to develop preferences for certain television personalities and looked forward to seeing them each day.

It was evident from the observations made during the pilot study that more objective consideration should be given to the effects of commercial television on the mentally ill; thus, a second study (1) was undertaken in August 1953. The patients selected for this study were 67 chronically psychotic females who were confined to a closed ward and had had no access to television during their hospitalization. The behavior patterns and activity levels of the patients were observed and evaluated for a three-month period from August 8, 1953, to November 8, 1953. At this time a television