

Psychiatric unit is home-like

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There is nothing about the building that spells psychiatry to the person who enters for the first time.

The furniture is comfortable, the colors are warm and cheerful, tasteful paintings hang on the walls, usually music can be heard in the lounges where the patients play games, talk, watch television, or work on some creative project.

Mrs. Mildred Powell, assistant director of psychiatric nursing, and her staff at the Hervey M. Cleckley building at University Hospital do their best to make it homelike.

"It's geared to home life. We continue with the outside activities plus intensive treatment so that it is not such a big step when they leave," Mrs. Powell said.

The Cleckley building, design-

ed as an intensive treatment center, had its open house on July 20, 1960. It has a 54-bed ward but could accommodate more if necessary.

The average patient, referred to the ward from a point anywhere in the United States, but usually Georgia or another southeastern state, remains about 30 days. There are patients with all types and degrees of mental disturbances here.

Here patients receive different therapies — electric therapy, limited insulin therapy, psychotherapy, drug therapy — and some are there for observation and diagnosis.

Mrs. Shelia Rose, director of special activities, and her summer assistant, Miss Emily Stevens, a student in music therapy, plan a variety of activities each month for the patients.

They have cook-outs, bingo

parties, square dancing, movies, do metal work, make ceramics, take part in art classes, etc.

"The music and arts and crafts are used as emotional outlets and to provide diversion for the patients," Mrs. Powell said.

There is a beauty salon operated by students from the Vocational School on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each week and the patients are encouraged to do their own hair.

A sewing machine, washing machine, and musical instruments help encourage the patients to continue their outside lives.

The staff at the ward is divided into groups who work together to give unity to the patients' treatment. No member is without training in some degree.

There are six psychiatrists, who work in two groups, and the

clinical nursing team under the supervision of Mrs. Powell composed of graduate nurses, practical nurses, technicians, assistant technicians, aides and orderlies, student professional nurses, student practical nurses and medical students.

This second group is responsible for patients care and interpersonal relationship.

Finally, there are the ward managers, assistants, secretaries, messengers, maids, janitors and cooks.

Much of the work is done on parttime and voluntary basis by private individuals and organizations such as the Red Cross Grey Ladies.

There is a strong in-service program and every non-nurse employe is enrolled in classes and receives from 90 to 100 hours of instruction.

"We stress using your own personality as a therapeutic

tool," Mrs. Powell said. "We need thinkers and people who are good at listening and being aware. There are no high-strung staff members."

The Cleckley Building itself was designed as a flexible center to take care of patients who have minor problems as well as the more acutely disturbed.

The patients are allowed free range of certain areas of the building, including lounges. There is a large, enclosed yard where certain activities are held and the rooms range from the motel-looking private rooms to the ones bare of equipment which might bring injury to a more violent person.

Mrs. Powell feels that modern psychiatry has come a long way in the treatment of mental illness, but that there is still much to be done to determine what causes such personality breakdowns.