Preliminary report on the experience with psychosomimetic drugs in the treatment of alcoholism

by

Z. Rydzyński, S. Cwynar, L. Grzelak, W. Jagiełło

Psychiatric clinic of Military Medical Academy, Łódź

Encouraged by the world literature reports on good effects of therapy of alcoholics with help of psychosomimetic drugs we started to use this method in 1965. We used two drugs: Psilocybin and Delysid, both produced by Sandoz. In two years and a half we treated 14 men aged 25 do 55. All of them had been treated previously as out- or in-patients, with no results. They belonged to a group of excessive chronic drinkers, majority in conflict with their nearest families and strongly connected with the "alcoholic environment" of their town. We injected psilocibin intramuscularly in doses of 9 mg and so we did with LSD-25, depending on the patient's tolerance and on his body weight, in doses of 100 to 800 µ. As a rule we started the cure with psilocibin, next LSD was used, and then for every 3 delysid injections we gave a psilocibin one. It seems to prevent from getting used to the same drug and allows to avoid increasing the dosage during cure. Psychosomimetic shocks were given, as a rule, one a week, exceptionally twice weekly. Towards the end of the procedure, in 3-4 hours time after the drugs were injected, the doctor taking care of the group had some exploratory talks with the patients during the first 2-4 sittings, later talks took the form of individual psychotherapy. On the days when no drugs were given, individual psychotherapy was systematically continued and half the patients had a group - psychotherapy one the day succeeding the psychosomimetic sitting. The leisure time of the patients was continually organized (work therapy, amusements, etc). Attempts were also made at improving their family relationships. During the hospitalization the patients received 6-8 psychosomimetic shocks. Thereafter all of them were offered to continue the cure as out-patients. Only 4 of them accepted it; they received totally 30 shocks.

The results are the better when the number of shocks is greater. The effects of 6-8 shocks were as follows: 2 men without any improvement, 7 with moderate improvement (they returned to addiction in 3-6 months), 3 with good improvement (ret. to the addiction in 12-18 months) and 2 have not returned to the addiction, for 18 months.

Beneficial effect of psychosomimetic drugs depend on 1st - their transforming influence upon the structure of personality, 2nd - making easier the psychotherapeutic contact with the doctor, 3rd - remission already after 2-3 shocks of the craving for drinking. Really good effects can be obtained by giving 30 or more psychosomimetic shocks in out-patient clinic at intervals of 1-2 weeks. Shorter treatment do not assure remission longer than half a year.

Usually, already after the first two shocks and before the leading doctor starts active psychotherapy, the alcoholic changes his cynical attitude to the environment, loses his desire for drinking, begins to believe in the possibility of getting rid of his habit and to accept attentively the doctor's suggestions.

We have not seen any somatic nor psychic complications.