

Experience of First Admissions to State Mental Hospitals

This study represents the cooperative effort of the statistical officers in 11 states in the Model Reporting Area for Mental Hospital Statistics and the Biometrics Branch, National Institute of Mental Health. The project, which grew out of a desire to compare data on the flow of patients into and out of the mental hospitals of the various States, had four major objectives. The first was to illustrate the mechanics and problems of conducting a cooperative study among 11 individual governmental organizations, widely separated geographically, where the study focuses on a complex problem requiring careful definition and analysis. The second was to present data on the probabilities of release, death in hospital, and continuous hospital residence for specified periods of time following first admission for different State mental hospital systems. The third was to emphasize the ways in which the basic data differ among States and to discuss the problems of interpreting interstate differences resulting from the incomparability of these data. The fourth was to delineate types of data, methodology, and special studies needed to obtain meaningful interstate comparisons.

The data presented indicate great variability among States in proportions of first admissions released, dying, or retained continuously in the hospital during the first year following admission. However, the primary emphasis of the monograph is on a discussion of the complex intra and extra hospital factors that affect interstate comparisons of the data. These factors include legal categories of admission, severity of illness at admission, population characteristics of the States, policies of the hospitals which affect admission or release, and the use of general hospitals, outpatient psychiatric clinics, and other community psychiatric facilities. As the discussion of these factors develops it becomes increasingly clear that the probabilities of release, death, and retention in the hospital

as presented in the monograph cannot be used as indexes of the therapeutic efficiency of the State mental hospital systems.

The authors discuss statistical adjustments of probabilities of release and death which would take into account the effect of the factors mentioned above. They emphasize that to refine further interstate comparisons of these probabilities studies are needed to determine the level of community adjustment of patients released from the hospital and the rate at which these patients return to the hospital. In these investigations it is extremely important to study the State mental hospital in relation to the entire range of facilities in the community for the care of psychiatric patients.

Public Health Monograph No. 58

Patterns of Retention, Release, and Death of First Admissions to State Mental Hospitals. *By Earl S. Pollack, Philip H. Person, Jr., Morton Kramer, and Hyman Goldstein.* Public Health Monograph No. 58 (PHS Pub. No. 672), 54 pages, illustrated. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1959, price 40 cents.

The accompanying summary covers the principal contents of Public Health Monograph No. 58, published concurrently with this issue of Public Health Reports. With the exception of Dr. Goldstein, who is with the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, the authors are with the National Institute of Mental Health, Public Health Service.

For readers wishing the data in full, copies are on sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Official agencies and others directly concerned may obtain single sample copies without charge from the Public Inquiries Branch, Office of Information, Public Health Service. Copies will be found also in the libraries of professional schools and the major universities and in selected public libraries.