

General Statement of the work of the Institute of Child Psychology

By Dr Margaret Lowenfeld

The Institute of Child Psychology is an outpatient Children's Clinic, founded in 1988. In 1932 it was incorporated as a Benevolent Society, under the Friendly Societies Acts. In 1947 it was reorganised as a non-profit making limited company. Its premises, situated since 1937 in a freehold house, No. 6 Pembridge Villas, W.11, comprise:- A floor of specially equipped playrooms, consultation rooms, testing rooms, record and students' rooms, physical re-education room, and a small garden.

The clinic receives children of all ages up to 18 years, apart from Mental Deficients.

The work of the Institute of Child Psychology is based on the belief that morbid psychological conditions can manifest themselves as well in physical as in emotional, social or intellectual disturbances; and that a combination of physical, psychological, educational and social treatment can produce more complete and lasting results than can any of these forms of treatment applied separately.

The Institute of Child Psychology, therefore, receives for advice and treatment the following classes of children:-

- a. Children suffering from disturbances of their emotional life, e.g. anxiety, night terrors, fears, inhibitions, nervousness, temper tantrums, etc.
- b. Children suffering from chronic physical disorders, e.g. epilepsy, asthma, debility, constipation, enuresis, etc.
- c. Children who are unable to adjust themselves socially:-
 1. **At school:** e.g. bullying, sneaking, unmanageableness, truancy
 2. **At home:** e.g. quarrelling, jealousy, excessive timidity, inability to bear separation from parents

3. **Generally:** e.g. stealing, lying, hooliganism, destructiveness

- d. Children with educational difficulties, e.g. failure in concentration, inability to learn particular subjects, mirror-writing, word-blindness, etc.

Children come from all income levels, from any part of the country and from all types of education. They are referred for consultation and treatment by GPs and Consultants, Headmasters and Head Mistresses, School Doctors, social agencies and parents, and there is an arrangement between the ICP and Middlesex County Council for children to be sent from that area.

The number of children accepted for treatment is regulated by the time available to the staff, and the usual current case load is about fifty. The aim governing the work is to accept only that number of children for whom thorough treatment can be provided and a full study assured.

The work of the ICP, described in the many full records and case histories which have been kept since 1933, has as a main feature an investigation of morbid conditions in children which is based upon a direct study of children themselves through the use of the psychotherapeutic methods described below.

The staffing of the ICP is so arranged as to make this possible and also to train lay men and women in the psychotherapy of children. The training course covers three years and is terminated by a diploma examination conducted by external examiners. Training of physicians in child psychiatry is also undertaken.

Throughout its existence the ICP has carried out research into the possibilities of devising objective tests for children. This has resulted in the design of several pieces of apparatus and test material which have now gained wide acceptance.

In addition, the ICP has contributed to the campaign for mental hygiene through –

- a. Lectures by members of staff to educational bodies, conferences, etc.
- b. Organisation of meetings, etc., at the ICP
- c. Preliminary investigation and experiment by a member of staff into the possibilities of prophylactic measures in a housing community (at the St. Pancras Housing Settlement, by invitation of the St. Pancras Housing Estate).

Detailed Statement of the Work of the ICP

The following are the general **conditions** for which children are at present referred:-

- a. **Psychoneuroses:** temper tantrums, night terrors, hysteria, nervousness, anxiety, thumb-sucking, lack of self-confidence, jealousy, phobias, sex difficulties
- b. **Disturbances of function:** faecal incontinence, sleep disturbances, feeding difficulties, difficulties in habit training, stammering, speech difficulties, refusal to walk
- c. **Personality disturbances:** inability to make contacts, unstable temperament, suicidal tendencies, infantile autism
- d. **Psychical conditions:** asthmas, cerebral palsy, dribbling in boy of 7, Rosema, Enuresis, Fits, Flaccid Diplegia, Mutism, Neuralgia and headaches, ties, cases have also been seen of Arachnodactyly and Coeliac Disease
- e. **Anti-social Behaviour:** pilfering, behaviour disorders, aggressiveness, unmanageableness, truanting, lying, exhibitionism, 'moral delinquency;
- f. **School problems:** backwardness in schoolwork, inability work or to concentrate, unhappiness at school, unmanageable at school. Specific educational difficulties.

Treatment is carried out by means of a children's and a parent's department

Work of the Children's Department

1. Diagnosis includes: (a) the full psychiatric and psycho logical examination of children 2 – 18, together with the use of psychodiagnostics and personality tests and psychiatric evaluation; intelligence tests and tests of educational

attainment, study of home and school backgrounds: (b) study of the parental situation and handling of infants and children under 2, and of the emotional elements in feeding and habit training.

2. Treatment includes:

- a. Psychotherapeutic treatment of children individually and in groups by Direct Projective Therapy, i.e., the method of 'play therapy' developed but the ICP and described in the publications listed below: (see page 4)
- b. Concurrent medical treatment where desirable.
- c. Physical Re-educations. The ICP has experimented for 10 years with the use of a specialised form of physical re-education in the treatment of physical maladjustment, as it expresses itself in, for example retarded physical development, incoordination of movement, postural abnormalities. The department also undertakes the treatment of asthmas and respiratory diseases/ physical re-education is carried out where described in conjunction with Direct Projective Therapy.
- d. Remedial teaching where necessary and if possible.

Work of the Parent's Department

Many of the conditions listed above arise in situations complicated neurosis in the parents, faults in handling of the children, or ignorance or failure on the part of the parents.

To meet the situation, the ICP has a Parents' Department where physicians trained in the psychotherapy of adults undertake consultations with and treatment (where necessary) of the parents. In a certain percentage of cases, discussion of the total situation with the parents assists in preventing the occurrence of parallel mistakes with the other children.

Follow-up of Cases

Personal and continuous contact has been maintained by the ICP staff with many of the cases, thus enabling continuous records of their progress into adult life to be kept.

Ex-patients are now returning for help and advice on their own children.

Publications

1. A new Approach to the Problem of Psychoneurosis in Childhood:
B.J.Med.Psych.Vol.Xi.Pt.III.1931
2. Psychogenic Factors in Chronic Disease in Childhood:
Med.Women's Fed. New-Letter. 1937.
3. World Pictures of Children:
B.J. Med. Psych. Vol. XVIII, pt 1. 1939
4. The Value of Play Therapy in Child Psychiatry
Prec. of R.S.M. , Vol, LXXXIX, No.8, 1946
5. Play in Childhood
Gollancs. 1935
6. An Account of Lowenfeld Technique in a Child Guidance Clinic, with a Survey of
Therapeutic Play Technique in Great Britain and USA
Jnl. Mental. Sci. Vol. XCI, No. 382, 1945

General Organisation

The ICP is in a transitional stage, the formation of the company having only just been completed. The internal administration has not yet been fully carried out. The affairs of the company are under a Board of Directors, some of whom are yet to be appointed.

The clinical work is under the direction of a Medical Committee, consisting of the medical members of the staff, and training work is under the direction of an Academic Committee, consisting of:- Chairman Dr. Lowenfeld, Member: Dr. Castell, Miss M. Kerr (Bedford College, London), Dr. J.C Mackwood and Miss M.D. Vernon (Reading University).

The staff consists of a Medical Director (Dr. Lowenfeld); in the Children's department, a Paediatrist (Dr. Maurice L. Young), Psychotherapists, both medical and lay (Dr. Castell), Dr Lowenfeld, Dr. E. Rellish, Miss J.N. Lawson, Dip. I.C.P and Miss R. Simpson, Dip I.C.P.), an Educational Psychologist (Miss M. Holt, B.A) and the head of the Department is in the charge of physicians trained in adult psychotherapy (Dr. Jeanna Palmer and Dr. Wellish). Contact the parents to continuously maintained by a lay member of staff who holds the Diploma of the I.C.P. (Miss Jordan). There is also a General Secretary to the Institute (Mrs A. Ginnett).

Finance and Fees

Up to December 31st, 1947, the organisation of the finance of the ICP was parallel to that of the voluntary hospitals. The Institute received grants from the L.C.C. and other bodies, and fees from patients on the same scale as that for the voluntary hospitals; no child was refused on financial grounds. The staff was honorary. The reorganisation into a limited company was undertaken mainly in order to make the experiment of combining the work of private practice with work of the type formerly undertaken by the voluntary hospitals; and to make possible payment of the staff.

The accountants to the institute are Messrs, Williams, Dysons, Jones & Co., 251-2 Dashwood House, Old Broad Street, E.C.2.