

Doctor to 86,000 Patients

Paul Henry Hoch

AS A psychiatrist with 86,000 patients, it is small wonder that Paul Henry Hoch, M. D., spends no time analyzing their dreams. Right now he works on treatment in the blueprint stage. Dr. Hoch, chief architect of the state's vast mental health program since 1955, has reluctantly moved out of the research laboratory into administration and politics—a move that might have driven lesser physicians to a psychiatrist.

He is still somewhat baffled by red tape—it takes one bill in the Legislature to change the speed limit on the grounds of a state hospital from ten to 15 miles an hour. And there are twenty-seven institutions under the direction of Dr. Hoch.

When he left the relative calm of a post in a state mental institution, he was principal research psychiatrist at New York Psychiatric Institute for the confusion of administration, he inherited 116,000 patients. Of these, 93,000 were in the eighteen state hospitals; the rest in state schools for mental defectives.

Rising by 3,000 a Year

The number of patients was increasing by 3,000 a year and the prospect of bulging hospitals—termed human warehouses by some—seemed inevitable. The concept of unlocked doors and relative freedom had begun to develop, but nearly 100 per cent of the institutions consisted of closed wards.

Now, seven years later, Dr. Hoch has 86,000 patients in mental hospitals where two-thirds of the wards are open.

Dr. Hoch, a modest, forthright man, would be the first to admit that this is not all his doing. The dramatic change results from a happy coincidence of drugs and drive.

When he left his research post, Dr. Hoch had more than one hundred research projects to his credit, but he found he was changing horses at a fortuitous time. Much of the fruit of his and others' research in the mood-altering drugs was at the very brink of application; he was following the drugs from the laboratory to the ward.

Dr. Hoch, born in Hungary in 1902, came to the United States with a solid European education and training. He had rejected his father's plan for him to continue in the family banking business. At the age of 15, he said, he determined to become a doctor.

He took his medical training at the University of Göttingen in Germany and interned at the University Hospital there. He began psychiatric work at the Psychiatric Clinic in Zurich in 1928, moved on to the neuropsychiatric clinic of the University of Göttingen and from 1930-33 directed the outpatient department and brain research division of its neuropsychiatric clinic.

Dr. Hoch, who still speaks with a rich Hungarian accent, came to the United States in 1933. He was in charge of the



Out of the laboratory and into the arena.

shock treatment unit at Manhattan State Hospital. He became chief medical officer of the Hospital for War Neuroses at Gladstone, N. J., in 1942.

He went to the New York Psychiatric Institute, the state's model research center at 168th Street and was placed in charge of its department of experimental psychiatry in 1948.

Since becoming head of the vast mental health system of the state and administrator of the Community Mental Health Services Act, Dr. Hoch has followed a grueling schedule, usually, his aides say in exhaustion, seven days a week.

He Teaches Here

Besides writing papers—150 have been published in scientific journals—serving on editorial boards, writing fifteen books, belonging to well over twenty professional societies, he is a teacher. He was assistant professor of psychiatry and neurology at Göttingen; since coming here, he has taught at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, where he is now professor of clinical psychiatry.

There may be a medical group in his field, national or international, that he does not belong to. It seems doubtful.

When Dr. Hoch became Mental Hygiene Commissioner in 1955, a staff writer for Mental Hygiene, the newspaper of the department, staggered through the list of Dr. Hoch's accomplishments, noted his Continental charm and found himself, or more likely herself, wondering "how he has managed to remain a bachelor."

However, in the fall issue of 1960, Mental Hygiene ran a story announcing the resignation of Barbara Griffiths, director of the department's volunteer services. At the very end it noted she was resigning to be married to Commissioner Paul H. Hoch. And that was the entire announcement. Dr. and Mrs. Hoch now live on East Ninety-sixth Street.