

# Willowbrook resident gashes doctor's head in attack

By ROBERT MIRALDI

An 18-year-old Willowbrook Developmental Center resident attacked a staff physician yesterday morning, inflicting a six-inch gash on the doctor's head and sending her to St. Vincent's Medical Center.

The center resident, called by officials a "classic psychotic," has been involved in 44 incidents in her building since Willowbrook disbanded an isolation psychiatric ward at the end of April.

Reportedly, the husky young woman, who has been at Willowbrook for eight years and who was locked in her room by late yesterday afternoon, has been responsible for putting 11 Willowbrook staffers on disability leave.

The doctor who was attacked, Dr. Hea-Gin Pai, 40, at Willowbrook for eight months, was rushed by ambulance to St. Vincent's Medical Center around noontime and, after receiving stitches, was released last evening.

"I thought she was going to die," said one staff member who witnessed the attack. When an Advance reporter visited the building yesterday, gauze pads were still lying on the floor with blood seeping onto the tiles.

Members of the Willowbrook Benevolent Society, a parents' group recounted the incident this way: About 11:30 a.m., they said, Dr. Pai was standing in a hallway near the office of one of the center's deputy directors, Dr. Stanley Slawinski.

The 18-year-old resident suddenly—without provocation;

sources said—attacked Dr. Pai, whose back was turned, and hurled her against a cement wall. Dr. Pai, they said, stumbled into the office of Dr. Slawinski, pushing the door open and falling into a chair.

Slawinski immediately called for an ambulance and the police. Accompanied by a physician, Slawinski attempted to locate the cut on Dr. Pai's scalp, but blood was pouring from her head and had already covered her white suit.

The parents' group said that Dr. Pai's pulse was erratic and that her eyes were rolling backward. By 11:45 an ambulance had arrived and by about noon Dr. Pai had been rushed to St. Vincent's for treatment.

The resident who attacked Dr. Pai and who is supposed to have one-to-one staff attention on a 24-hour basis was brought back to her 6-by-12-foot room after the incident. Earlier in the day, sources said, the resident had picked up a table and hurled it across a ward at a staff member.

A four-day-old report on the dispersion of residents into Willowbrook's buildings says that this particular resident was put into a separate room because of her "extreme destructive and abusive behavior."

"Placement in this type of setting," the report said, "is inappropriate."

Sources in the resident's buildings said yesterday that they would like to see the resi-

dent transferred "because someone is going to get killed."

Thomas A. Coughlin, the Department of Mental Hygiene's deputy commissioner who made the decision to break up the psychiatric unit and sent 60 disturbed residents into buildings, could not be reached yesterday. He met with the Willowbrook Review Panel in Manhattan yesterday morning.

The department's regional director, Dr. Alvin Mesnikoff, a psychiatrist and former director of a psychiatric center on Staten Island, said that "the issue is the need to develop special kinds of programs.

"Clearly," Mesnikoff said, Willowbrook should have the capacity to deal with such disruptive patients. Whether it has is a different matter."

Mesnikoff said that he has ordered the formation of such a special unit at the Brooklyn Developmental Center. "We have an obligation to set up this unit," he said.

Meanwhile, Anthony Pinto, of the Benevolent Society and the center's consumer adviser board, pinned the blame for the incident squarely on Coughlin's shoulders. "Even with staff and resources presently available," Pinto said, "there is no way to handle her (the resident)."

"Coughlin has to take the blame for this," he said, pointing to staff reports which warned that such a problem could erupt. Yesterday's incident was not the first. On May 30 a 20-year-old resident was

attacked by the same female resident.

A report to the Willowbrook Review Panel by Slawinski details the situation. "I was told...that I should be able to reorganize my staffing pattern to assimilate (the resident)," Slawinski said in the report.

"I asked what the behavior problems were, if any, and if she were a dangerous person. I was reassured that her episodes of 'misbehavior' were minimal and that she would be easily controlled in a dormitory situation," the report said.

"I was really faced with no alternative, meaning I had no choice in the matter," Slawinski continued in the report.

Three after hours after her arrival in Building 21, the resident, without provocation, had hit another resident over the head and face with a shoe, with injuries requiring eight stitches. "Even with two people assigned to her, (the resident) is still considered a difficult resident to handle."

On Monday the resident is slated to be transferred to another building.