

Willowbrook children) from hurting themselves and there are no other alternatives than drugs."

Ziring said Willowbrook must enter a "new era," explaining there is a need to try "new, innovative approaches" to diminish the behavior problems of some of the institutionalized retarded, including mood-control chemicals.

But he refused to characterize the treatment as an "experiment," even though the drugs have not been recommended for the purposes Dr. Campbell intends to use them.

The international standard of medical experimentation on humans was set originally at the Nuremberg trials for Nazi war criminals. It was adopted by the United States government in 1953. It said that medical experiments should be for the good of mankind and that a person must give full and informed consent before being used as a subject.

But today, no two doctors or scientists give the same definition of experimentation.

Dr. Ziring, for example, argues that by one standard everything in medicine could be considered research because a therapeutic experiment takes place each time a new treatment is prescribed — since, he explained, that particular patient has never been treated at that particular time in that particular way.

But according to most scientists interviewed, the most distinguishing aspect of experimentation is uncertainty about the outcome. Most believe a doctor is engaged in an experiment when he or she departs from standard medical practice in treating a patient for the purpose of obtaining new knowledge or testing a hypothesis.

The traditional method of dealing with abusive or aggressive mentally retarded persons is said, at least publicly, to be psychotherapy.

The use of psychoactive drugs at institutions like Willowbrook is discouraged by parents as well as experts, since there is a fear that the rights of the residents, incapacitated and vulnerable, will be violated, with contraindicated chemicals administered merely to "straightjacket" them.

There has been a history of such abuse at Willowbrook.

What makes parents worry about the proposal under review, they say, is that Dr. Campbell's research protocol is a closely held secret. A reporter's efforts to gain a copy from Willowbrook administrators proved fruitless, and Dr. Campbell herself refused to discuss its provisions.

But from interviews with Willowbrook administrators and workers, state officials in Albany, parents and Willowbrook Review Panel members, information was developed about the institution's desire to use the drugs Lithium and Haldol, in addition to the more traditional mind-control substances.

The plan, first revealed in a recent report of the Willowbrook Review Panel, the court-appointed committee charged with overseeing conditions there, was harshly criticized as a "disturbing" program, a proposal "in lieu of a plan for provision of psychiatric services...a proposal for chemical research on children with Lithium, Haldol and Thorazine in plain violation of the prohibition against such experimentation...in the Consent Decree."

Dr. Ziring, a professor at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, explained he asked Dr. Campbell, a consultant at Willowbrook and a pioneer in Lithium research on children, to develop an approach to aid mentally retarded persons under 21 years old who have behavior, emotional or psychiatric problems.

If her proposal were accepted, Ziring told her, she would be paid by the state on a contract basis.

There are approximately 1,200 Willowbrook residents under 21, and half of those live in the baby complex which, come September, no longer be operated by the state. It is unclear exactly how many of the remaining adolescents are considered to have psychotic diseases.

Early in 1977, apparently Dr. Campbell submitted her protocol outlining an experiment that called for the testing of 30 adolescents to be divided in two groups.

One group was to have been given the drug Thorazine or a placebo, while the other was to have been tested with Lithium and Haldol. The aim: To see which drug best controlled undesirable behavior.

When the review panel heard of the plan — in a March 31 letter from Dr. Levester Cannon, Willowbrook's director, to Michael Lottman, an attorney serving on the review panel — the reaction was "one of shock," a spokesman for the panel said.

But the idea was volleyed back and forth, with review panel members telling Willowbrook administrators, in essence, to "Forget it" and Willowbrook administrators responding "Why should we?" according to the panel spokesman.

Last week, however, the highly critical comment contained in the panel's "Report to the Court" on conditions at Willowbrook, prompted Dr. Ziring, Dr.

Campbell and review panel members to sit down at a high level meeting. The idea for a controlled experiment testing the psychoactives was scrapped.

But Dr. Ziring said last Friday, two days after the meeting, that Dr. Campbell intends to submit another proposal, which will carry the same emphasis as the first — on psychoactive drugs as the primary mode of psychiatric treatment.

The drugs to be used, according to Ziring, include Lithium, Haldol, Thorazine and "some others, too."

The leadership of Willowbrook's consumer and professional advisory boards charge this second plan is perhaps more morally reprehensible than the first since its effect is to cloak an experiment under the veil of treatment.

"This is their way of trying to circumvent the proper channels and not ask for approval from any official body," Katie McKaig, president of the consumer board, said.

Dr. Ziring denied any "secrecy," saying it is ludicrous to think that the Willowbrook administration "could slip (the plan) through" several advisory groups as well as the court.

But he admitted that if the plan to use the drugs is undertaken, there would be no need to gain informed consent from guardians because "we are providing treatment any doctor would give."

Lottman, the review panel member, said: "Nobody should worry about it, because there's no way in the world the review panel is going to allow the use of Lithium." He said the panel had not voted on Dr. Campbell's first proposal since there was "total agreement it was ludicrous."

Dr. Campbell and Dr. Ziring, Lottman added, are both highly qualified physicians, "but the proposal is just not viable for Willowbrook."

Lottman said Thomas Coughlin, deputy commissioner of the Department of Mental Hygiene, favors the proposal for a psychoactive drug project at the institution. Coughlin could not be reached for comment.

Finally, Lottman said, the 1975 Consent Decree prohibits experimentation at Willowbrook to guard against the traditionally abusive way the institutionalized retarded had been treated in the past.

The Consent Decree states: "This standard (barring experimentation), however, recognize the possibility that such research or experimentation under proper safeguards, may be appropriate for persons who are not members of the (Willowbrook) class, in other facilities or other programs."