

# WAR MAY DELAY TREATMENT OF INSANITY

**AUSTRALIA'S  
POSITION  
IS BETTER  
THAN IN  
1914**

**HOW "SCHIZO-  
PHRENICS"  
ARE SHOCKED  
INTO A  
NEW WORLD**

**S**TOPPAGE of drug supplies from Germany is not causing anxiety to Australian dealers. They are confident that they will be able to get from England, America, Japan, and Italy, most of the drugs they have been importing from Germany. But the war may delay an important branch of medicine, the treatment of schizophrenia (dementia praecox) by what is known as "shock therapy." Cardiazol, a German drug, is used mostly to produce the convulsions which shock the schizophrenic from the world of unreality to which his tortured mind has retreated.

**G**ERMANY'S war measures will affect production of the drug, and its importation into Australia, except from neutral countries holding large supplies, will be impossible.

Schering Pty., Limited, Australian agents for cardiazol, told "Smith's Weekly" that they had enough stock to fulfil normal orders for some months.

"Could the drug be manufactured in Australia?" "Smith's" asked.

"I believe attempts have been made outside Germany to manufacture the drug, but they have been unsuccessful because of the highly dangerous process," Schering's manager replied.

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Dr. W. S. Dawson, professor of psychiatry at Sydney University, said that another drug—in his opinion equally as good as cardiazol—was being made in the United States, and this probably would be used in Australia for the treatment of schizophrenia.

The position regarding drugs generally is very different from that in 1914. Then, Germany was the only nation manufac-

the only nation manufacturing many important drugs, and the war caused Australia much inconvenience.

Now Australian manufacturers can produce many of the drugs needed here and all the vaccines, serums and antiseptics.

During the last war Australian chemists learned the

Australian chemists learned the secret of German aspirin, a necessary drug, and can provide all supplies needed here.

There may be some difficulty in obtaining potash salts such as chloride and caustic of potash, but it is believed that Japan will be able to supply them. Mercury salts for ointments should be obtainable from Italy.

England has barred the export of drugs

for the present, but permits will soon be issued to enable Australia to obtain her needs. Because of increased freights and higher war risks, imported drugs will probably rise about 20 per cent. in price.

The importance of cardiazol in mental hygiene is shown by the fact that schizophrenia is twice as prevalent as tuberculosis. In

New South Wales, these patients occupy the larger proportion of the 11,000 beds in mental hospitals.

The incidence of the disorder is steadily rising, and it attacks young people on the verge of maturity. Many psychiatrists believe that it is an outcome of anxiety; that patients derive their unhappy condition from adverse conditions in babyhood.

"Certain factors of our civilisation are inimical to mental health," a specialist in nervous disorders said. "Oppressed by worries, even if felt only sub-consciously, the patient retreats into a world of day-dreams and refuses to face the stern realities of life."

Writing in the current issue of the "Medical Journal of Australia," Dr. Broughton Barry, deputy medical superintendent of the Orange

hospital, deputy medical superintendent of the Orange Mental Hospital (N.S.W.), describes cardiazol, which is a synthetic compound roughly allied to camphor, as "the elixir of life to a hitherto doomed race."

As described by Dr. Barry,

the treatment is most dramatic. Five cubic centimetres of cardiazol are quickly injected into a vein. Within a few seconds the effects show. The earliest sign is usually a cough as the drug enters the lungs; a few seconds later the eyelids twitch, the patient makes a few spasmodic movements, the eyes open widely in a fixed, unseeing stare, the patient sits half up, slowly stiffens and the convulsion begins.

By this time the patient is unconscious; the body falls backward and stiffens in a spasm; the mouth opens widely and air expressed from the lungs may force a scream.

This stage lasts ten seconds . . . Then the patient becomes blue in the face, the spasms relax and there is a period, at times alarmingly prolonged, during which breathing is partially suspended. Then the patient takes a deep, stertorous breath, followed by a few others, and the breathing gradually becomes normal.

So blue in the face does

the patient sometimes become, and so heavily does the time drag during the period of suspended respiration, that it seems he must die; however, the anxiety is pointless, as breathing always begins again and there has, as yet, been no need for artificial respiration. For about ten minutes the patient is in a stupor, from which he slowly emerges.

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Dr. Barry relates that in the year ended July 31, Orange Mental Hospital treated with cardiazol 42 newly admitted patients, 37 of whom were schizophrenics. Of that number, 22 had gone home, the condition of 11 was improved, mostly very much, and six were still under treatment last month; most of these were improving and it was hoped that some of them would go home.

Generally, the figures of cardiazol treatment at

Orange upheld the claim of the pioneer of the treatment, Dr. von Meduna, of Budapest, that a remission of symptoms occurred in 90 per cent. of cases.

This is a dramatic example of cardiazol treatment:

A woman had been in hospital for nearly three years and had not spoken. She had to be fed, dressed and pushed everywhere. After one injection she began to talk, after the third she was talking brightly; she was happy, working most energetically and asking to go home. After nine injections she went home, and eventually she was discharged, recovered, on the certificate of her physician.

For more than two and a half years this woman had been an apparently hopeless deaf mute, depressive; in a week she became as well as she had ever been in her life.

Dr. Barry concludes his paper with the observation: "A new weapon of immense power has been added to our therapeutic armament. A new outlook has been given to psychiatry."

It is to be hoped that war-curtailed supplies of cardiazol will not leave wretched schizophrenics shut in their prison of unreality.