

Part of the research involves comparisons between drug addicts and alcoholics, and between addicts of any sort and members of the so-called "healthy" society. Angela Miller, a graduate in psychology, has been studying the perceptual characteristics of drug users vis-a-vis those of alcoholics; and Alexandra Hercrep and Larry Peta are investigating the ethical evaluations of drug addicts, comparing them to those of alcoholics and members of "straight" society. Dr. B. Sinha of the psych. department is working with Hercrep and Peta on this rather complicated subject.

Meanwhile, student Marilyn Sveen is continuing with the evaluation aspect of the research, trying to improve the data-gathering system so that more relevant material may be collected.

The final aspect of data-gathering is putting the information collected into a form the computer can read. Computers are a strange and cantankerous breed of animal, and a considerable amount of expertise is required to make information suit the exotic taste of an IBM 370; consequently, Peter Fursteneau, a methodologist, is working with the research team in the field of data analysis, which includes preparing information for ingestion by the computer.

"I think the evaluation research we have done has been quite valuable to the project," stated Dr. Nelson. "It has indicated who's looking for help, and it has also helped to indicate how effective the help they're getting is.

"We judge effectiveness of the project's work by three criteria: whether or not the addict becomes employable; how his rate of arrest changes; and whether dependence decreases. The biggest effects demonstrated by Point 3 are in the first two criteria, although in some cases addicts have shown marked decrease in dependency on drugs as well." West claims the project succeeds in getting about 70% of its patients out of the addiction rut.

Dr. Nelson noted that he doesn't think clinics like Point 3 are really very effective in combatting the addiction problem. "However, I don't have any better alternatives myself," he added. "Actually, Point 3 is more effective than other clinics of its type that I've seen.

One advantage of Point 3 is its extremely economical operation. The project gets \$3 per patient per day from the Social Development branch of the provincial government, and while this is admittedly insufficient to completely finance the project, they have been surviving on that amount so far; and not too much money is needed to finance it completely, including paid staff. "I feel that the decrease in arrests alone is enough to justify the existence of Point 3 and repay to the public the cost of the project. Patients of the project tend to stop being nuisances to society; and the fact that many of them get jobs means that they become a help to society rather than a hindrance. In this way I think the project is very useful to Edmonton, and we'd have a real problem on our hands if it were to stop operating."



"However," he continued, "to present such a project as a curer of the narcotic habit would be a mistake—it acts more as a controller of habits than as a curer. However, as I said, just as a controller it is making its patients no longer a nuisance to society so in that sense the project's existence is certainly justified."

Dr. Nelson has considerable praise for the job West is doing as commandant of the whole setup. "I think Edmonton is lucky to have West around", he claimed. "He's making a real contribution to society, and if he were to quit we'd have a real problem on our hands trying to replace him.

"He's made mistakes, but, to his credit, he's never invented a mechanism for covering himself up. The whole project is an ideal subject for research, because they're very flexible and open-minded. They opened themselves up for research, and we've found them very willing to listen to our suggestions as to how the project could be improved. They have no set of preconceived notions as to how the place should be run, and consequently their modus operandi has changed considerably over time.

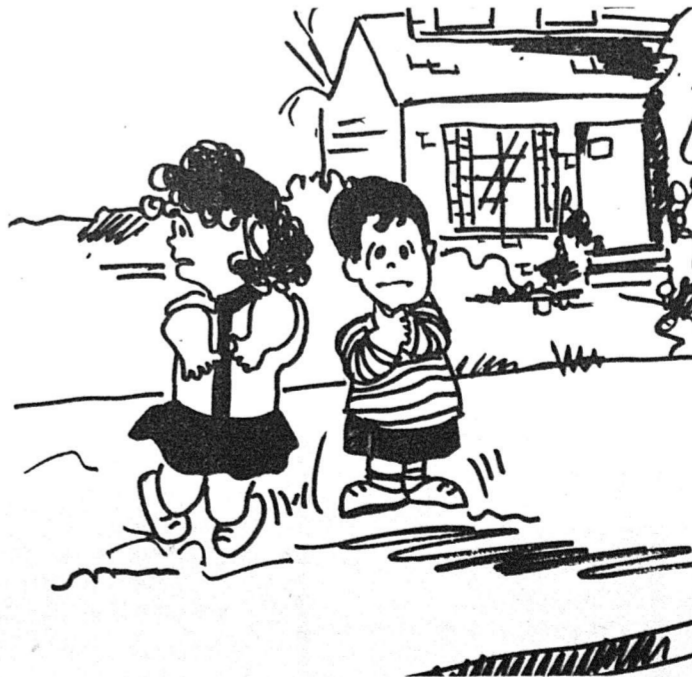
"West has been receiving some criticism for the way he's run the project, but I think people should realize that if you kick a man like West long enough, he'll quit. Certainly we'd have trouble finding another man with his combination of warmth and honesty when dealing with addicts."

Dr. Nelson noted that his research team has become an accepted part of the life of the addicts. "they were pretty suspicious at first," he noted, "but the people came regularly and eventually the people got used to them. They realise now that the researchers are not just pryers intent on tearing them apart, but people genuinely interested in finding out more about addicts."

Dr. Nelson has a few opinions about the medical methods used at Point 3. "Nobody's satisfied with methadone, let's face it," he said. "But methadone is better than heroin for two reasons: it's legal, and thus the addict is not constantly in trouble with the law; and when methadone is being used, nobody is feeding the underworld by buying heroin. These two reasons alone are a very powerful argument in favour of methadone use. But let's not overestimate the worth of methadone use. After all, only about 20% of methadone users are able to get off it by a withdrawal program."



This set of pictures is part of the research being done into ethical evaluations of addicts and alcoholics. The addict is asked to arrange the picture in two ways: one way depicting a happy ending, the other depicting an unhappy ending.



Dr. Nelson stressed the need for better facilities in Edmonton to deal with the problem of drug addiction. One of the things he mentioned was the need for a detoxification centre like the famous one in Lexington, Kentucky, where addicts merely live without drugs and get sick until their habit has been broken. He noted that the University of Alberta should set up a special chair to enable a professor to study the problem of drug addiction full-time. Such a chair, he said, is necessary because of the importance of the problem. "I'd like to devote more time to it myself, but I'm a departmental chairman, and I'm just too busy for it. The problem is of such magnitude that it demands somebody's full attention."

...but full-time person needed



The research is aimed at investigating the "addictive personality", and finding out what makes an addict what he is. One of the major problems is to find out what an addict responds to, and in what ways he responds.