

GROUP HERE HELPS NARCOTICS ADDICTS

'Anonymous' Unit Applies the Group Therapy Principle to Aid Newly Cured

Group therapy to help addicts to abstain from the use of narcotics has been applied successfully on a small but increasing scale here by Narcotics Anonymous. The organization has been assisted by members of Alcoholics Anonymous, from which it derived its name and program, although there is no official connection between the two groups.

The New York City chapter was started five months ago by a discharged patient from the United States Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Ky., where Federal prisoners and voluntary patients receive treatment. Like other members, he is known only by his first name, Danny.

An addict for twenty-five years, Danny had undergone a number of previous "cures" and once considered his case hopeless. Now he views the future with confidence and intends to devote the remainder of his life to the organization, which describes itself as "an informal society of former addicts" who maintain their own freedom from the habit "by helping other addicts to recover."

Not a Cure in Itself

The Narcotics Anonymous program, recently outlined in a booklet prepared by the local chapter, does not pretend to be a cure, itself. Like Alcoholics Anonymous, it is interested primarily in helping newly treated sufferers to continue their hard-won abstinence by introducing them to a dedicated "way of life" in which they pass on the benefits of their experience to other sufferers.

The program assumes that the cure is not enough. Continual "spiritual assistance" is needed to avoid the "joy pop" or first shot of "junk" that leads to renewed addiction. Members feel they are "living on borrowed time—twenty-four hours a day, one day at a time; but that, by means of this program, they may continue happily to do so."

This group approach to the problem originated in 1947 among patients at the Kentucky hospital. The New York chapter is the first outside branch. A monthly newspaper, *The Key*, published at the Federal institution, provides contact between the parent group and ex-patients.

There are sixteen members of Narcotics Anonymous here and membership has begun to expand rapidly. Hampered by a lack of permanent headquarters, the unit holds two meetings a week, on Tuesday and Friday nights, in the Salvation Army building at 535 West Forty-eighth Street.

No Reversions Reported

According to Danny, who acts as executive secretary of the local chapter, no member has reverted to the use of drugs. Compared with the usual high percentage of backsliders among "cured" addicts, this is an extraordinary record.

He believes the group approach is largely responsible for this success. The addict meets people who understand his intense emotional problems because they have experienced and overcome similar problems themselves. Association with others enables him to throw off the feelings of isolation and fear that often persist even after an apparently successful treatment.

Field work in the city's prisons and hospitals is an integral part of the organization's activities, and Danny, who began to use narcotics as a youth, is especially concerned with the rise of addiction among teen-agers.

Maj. Dorothy Berry of the Salvation Army became interested in Narcotics Anonymous through its work in the city's institutions. Miss Ann Husted, a social worker at the Women's House of Detention, Greenwich Avenue and West Tenth Street, serves as an adviser, as do several physicians here.