REPORT OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN VIRGINIA

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An examination of reports of the hospitals of Virginia fails to disclose much activity along the lines of occupational therapy. This is due apparently, to a lack of funds and trained personnel to carry on effective, systematic work. Some attention, at times, has been given the matter, in some of our institutions, where the management was interested and could do something, but this interest would cease with a change of management, perhaps for financial reasons, or others. So far as I am able to learn, there is no state hospital in Virginia that has occupational therapy but the one at Marion, Va., which was introduced by the United States Veterans Bureau for the benefit of the ex-soldiers being hospitalized there.

The state hospitals have occupations for the patients, such as farming, road work, building, etc., but these are not given for their therapeutic value, but simply for the returns from the work.

A private tubercular sanatorium, at Catawba, Va., has craft work, also the one at Culpeper, and there are perhaps a few isolated instances of this work in other private hospitals in the state.

The Veterans Bureau deserves credit for the responsibility it has taken in introducing occupational therapy into the hospitals where there are Veterans Bureau patients. In the Naval Hospital in Norfolk, academic work is taught, but none of the crafts. At Griffinsburg, Va., there is one man directing, and the work is mostly agricultural.

The greatest activity, at present, in occupational therapy, in the State of Virginia, is at Davis Clinic at Marion, Va. This

1 Read at sixth annual meeting of the American Occupational Therapy Association, held at Atlantic City September 25 to 29, 1922.
was opened in March, 1921, in connection with the Southwestern State Hospital, for neuro-psychiatric patients of the United States Veterans Bureau. Four instructors were assigned to the work, and since the opening, some 200 different patients, of all types, have been handled with success. The occupational therapy work has had the active and energetic support and guidance of the hospital authorities of the Southwestern State Hospital. The results are obvious and appreciated. The work at first was academic and agricultural. There were successful classes in all elementary and high school subjects. A great number of patients were interested in agriculture; so there were large classes in gardening, bee keeping and poultry raising. They started with 10 colonies of Italian bees and have increased them to 30 colonies. The poultry raising class has an incubator which holds 1800 eggs, by means of which the patients have raised several thousand white leghorn chickens, which, incidentally, furnish them with plenty of fried chicken and eggs. The patients do all their own carpenter work, under the supervision of the agricultural teacher and build their chicken houses, etc. Besides the carpentry work there are several patients studying auto mechanics.

There was a demand for craft work, so in January 1922, the craft shop was opened by two craft teachers. The men were so interested that they made the tables, benches, and cupboards themselves, which made the shop seem more personal to them. They do different kinds of weaving, making rugs, scarfs, etc., and lovely basketry work of reed, raffia, and long leaf pine needles. They use several other crafts also, such as making bead chains, scarfs, sweaters, hot dish mats, fancy bags, belts, sanitas luncheon sets, toys, oil painting, etc. The patients love their work and take great pride in their shop. It has had a great therapeutic value for them, and most of them have shown marked improvement as a result of their work. Exhibits of their work have been sent, by request, to several conventions and fairs.

In the month of August, 11 men out of 106 in the clinic were discharged and furloughed as sufficiently rehabilitated to return to their homes and pursue their usual occupations. It is expected
that this number will be equalled for the month of September. It is firmly believed that occupational therapy was a strong factor in the rehabilitation of these men.

What occupational therapy has done for the men at Davis Clinic will doubtless be repeated soon in other hospitals in Virginia for whenever any doctors or medical directors, from the State of Virginia or the State Hospital Board visit this hospital they never fail to come to the United States Veterans Bureau Craft Shop. They make many inquiries into the work and express the hope that they can introduce it soon into state hospitals and sanatoria.