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Evaluation of outcome of treatment in the somato-therapies.

The purpose of this study is to examine the available data on the outcome of the shock therapies and psychosurgery in order to determine the effectiveness of these therapies. Three types of data have been analyzed: (a) outcome of nonspecific therapies before the introduction of the shock therapies (“spontaneous” outcome), (b) outcome in the shock therapies, (c) outcome of cases treated with nonspecific therapies during the shock era, and (d) results of treated and matched control patients. The data for specific diagnostic groups will be treated separately.

Analyses of these data indicate that the following minimal information about the patients is essential if adequate comparisons are to be made: age at onset of illness, age at time of treatment, type of illness, type of treatment, and duration of follow-up. Unfortunately, very few studies satisfy these criteria.

The results for the outcome of nonspecific therapies indicate that the early studies in which groups heterogeneous with regard to age, functional or organic factors, etc., were used gave an improvement rate of 25% at the end of a five-year follow-up. For more homogeneous groups, schizophrenics for example, the rate was 33%, approximately. The variability from study to study indicated, however, that not much trust could be placed in these results as criteria for evaluating outcome of specific therapies.

When the data for somatically treated patients are examined, the immediate outcome in the treated group is invariably superior to that in the untreated group. For the few studies in which five-year follow-up results are available, no advantage is found for the somatically treated patients. (Slides)