

Wendy Rose-Neil

Tyringham Clinic

In 1967 a unique concept in health care was established when Tyringham Naturopathic Clinic first opened its doors to the public. It was, and still is, unique in many ways because of the philosophical approach to life and health shared by the founders, and because of the aims and constitution which have placed it outside the orthodox medical establishment.

All of the methods which are used to treat patients at the clinic are based on a simple assumption, that is - they must not suppress disease symptoms, which are in any case only an indication of lowered resistance and illness, and instead the methods should be used in an attempt to stimulate the inherent recuperative powers of the human body. For this reason, practitioners of naturopathic medicine reject in general most drug therapy and surgery except in rare cases. At Tyringham a very wide range of therapies is employed, including a great deal of acupuncture, balneotherapy, botanic medicine, electrical treatments, massage, physiotherapy, and postural, breathing, exercise, and Yoga classes amongst others.

In addition to this, great emphasis is laid on the importance of diet and its relation to health and disease, for naturopaths maintain that the general level of nutrition in this country is very poor today and is largely responsible for the millions of cases of obesity and degenerative disease which tax the National Health Service. For this reason, many patients are put on fasts for varying periods of time or on special diets for specific conditions. Much of the food used is organically grown in the gardens with a large proportion served raw. Because only vegetarian food is served in the clinic great use is made of plant foods which deplete the earth's resources less than many animal foods.

Although much of therapeutic effort is directed towards physical improvement and recovery, considerable attention is also paid to the psychological aspects, and patients who are great emotional stress are referred for supportive guidance and under counselling. In addition to this meditation classes are held and certain patients with anxiety problems are taught progressive relaxation using Bio-feedback methods in small groups. It is hoped that in time this area will be expanded so that a wide range of methods will be available to help patients develop their own potential and to help them become more aware of the possibility for personal growth and change in their lives on all levels.

To help in this direction, talks and discussion groups are held on various aspects of health care and education for living.

Probably the most important message which we seek to communicate is that it is possible for us to assume a great deal of personal responsibility for our own health and lives instead of relying on outside agents such as doctors and the state, if we only

become aware of the possibilities of an alternative way of life and society. For many people the notion that the way one lives is profoundly related to one's health and psychological well-being is a revolutionary concept, and many patients find their attitudes towards health radically altered after staying in the clinic.

A wide range of diagnostic facilities are available to back up the therapeutic department of the clinic, including an X-ray unit, a medical laboratory and E C G equipment. A total of 79 patients can be accommodated at any one time and over 90 staff are employed in the running of the establishment. The Clinic was founded as a charity in order to enable patients of all income groups to attend and in fact no one has ever been refused treatment for lack of money, in spite of the fact that there is no state aid.

There are three principle objectives written into the constitution of the clinic. The first of these is to establish a centre of treatment along the lines already described as an alternative to the state medical service. This has been achieved and is rapidly expanding in many ways. The second objective is to provide facilities for research into the scientific aspects of naturopathic medicine and into the broader aspects of related issues which are raised by acupuncture, biological energy problems, and, in fact, any area which will further our understanding of the 'Life Force'. A certain amount of finance has been raised and it is expected that some research will be under way in the near future. The third objective is to provide facilities for training students at both pre- and post-graduate levels in all areas of naturopathic medicine. Some success has already been achieved here, and it is hoped to develop this side much more extensively in the next few years.

Additional projects include the construction of an indoor therapeutic and recreational swimming pool and lecture theatre, and also it is hoped to establish a residential centre allied to the clinic to accommodate elderly people so that their old age may be spent as healthily as possible in a warm and caring environment. A unit for mothers and children is also planned for further ahead, so that they may have treatment without the traumatic effects of separation which hospitalisation often incurs.

The treatment provided at the clinic must by its nature be intensive since the average length of stay is two and a half weeks. Most patients recover or are greatly improved by the time they leave and quite a lot continue to improve afterwards either by their own efforts or by consulting practitioners who practise methods compatible with the clinic's. However, a problem frequently arises in the field of psychotherapy since it is often difficult to refer patients to a psychotherapist as there are no recognised organisations or registers of practitioners to consult. We are constantly reminded of the importance of continued help for our patients in this area of need, and yet we lack the contacts which would enable us to improve our service. For this reason, we would welcome details of psychotherapists whose methods and approaches are compatible with those used at Tyringham. Practitioners who are interested in having patients referred to them are invited to contact the clinic in order to exchange information and perhaps to arrange a visit. The address is Tyringham Clinic, Newport Pagnell, Bucks. Tel: Newport Pagnell 610450.