

IV. THE REHABILITATION OF THE IMBECILE A FOLLOW-UP REPORT

MICHAEL CRAFT, M.D., M.R.C.P.E., D.P.M.
Medical Superintendent, Oakwood Park Hospital, Conway.

There was a good deal of alarm expressed in 1957 at the Royal Commission's suggestions that many defective patients be discharged to the community, and the Royal Western Counties Hospital arranged a follow-up of all 370 patients discharged from it during the period 1946-55 inclusive to investigate possible dangers to the community. This follow-up was carried out on an average of five years after discharge and was successful for 315 patients, six further having died in the interval (Craft 1962). Fifty-three of the 315 had had a Binet, Wechsler or Stanford I.Q. of 35-49 at their last test within the hospital. This paper gives the results of follow-up for these 53 patients who had earlier been classified as imbeciles partly on social grounds, and partly on psychometric testing. For the sake of clarity, these patients are still referred to in the rest of this paper as imbeciles, although in keeping with the findings of the Clarkes (1958) and Craft (1959), it is probable that had these patients been retested at the time of follow-up, they would have scored a higher I.Q. than they had done previously.

As far as circumstances of admission are concerned it was noted that of 29 females, 19 had been admitted as requiring care and training and as requiring supervision after school. Of 24 males, 17 required supervision or care and training under these heads, with three entering as a result of offences against property, three sexual offences and one, a State Hospital transfer. Three females were admitted from the Courts.

Severe physical handicaps were noted in three males and one female, all four being unemployed and maintained by their families at follow-up.

Moderate physical handicaps were noted in six males and three females. On follow-up three of these had been either in the same job or continuously employed throughout the follow-up for the five years, the other six being unemployed or having had considerable periods of unemployment.

TABLE I — FOLLOW-UP

	Physically Handi- capped	Physi- cally Fit	Total Imbeciles		Total Follow-up Group (less Imbeciles)	
Working	3	37	40	75%	203	77%
Unemployed and on Assistance	8	1	9	17%	40	16%
Recertified	0	1	1	2%	6	2%
On Pension	0	1	1	2%	4	1%
Unemployed and sup- ported by family	2	0	2	4%	2	1%
Not known	0	0	0	0%	7	3%
Totals	13	40	53	100%	262	100%

The above table shows the work state of all 53 patients at time of follow-up and a comparison with the "feeble-minded" group*. Table Two shows work record for the two groups, which, as can be seen, are very similar if allowance is made for the physically handicapped.

*In fact, a breakdown of the original group (of 315) by intelligence levels gave the following interesting percentages: imbecile group (I.Q. 35-49) 75% employed; feeble-minded group (I.Q. 50-69) 79% employed; dull normal group (I.Q. 70+) 72% employed.

TABLE II — WORK RECORDS

	Imbeciles		Total Follow-up Group
Work unchanged since discharge	16	30%	27%
Different jobs but continuous employment	10	19%	24%
Periods of unemployment requiring assistance	27	51%	42%
Not known	0	0%	7%
Totals	53	100%	100%

In general, females were in domestic service, and males were unskilled labourers or semi-skilled 'gardeners.' There was, however, one imbecile man, original I.Q. 49, who rose to be among the 14 from the series of 315 who held skilled employment at follow-up. He had not been retested but was probably comparable with one Martha, who in the absence of psychosis rose from an admission I.Q. of 37 to one of 81 after five years in a remote Cornish hospital retreat. Both these tests were Stanford Binet and knowing both psychometrists personally to be reliable testers, and also knowing the patient personally, it is felt this rise was a change due to removal from an isolated and hostile family atmosphere to a hospital which, although remote, was neutral, had many patients, television and contacts with the outside world.

Marriage had blessed three males and seven females, two of the latter marrying ex-patients. One male and three females had had children in wedlock, two further females having illegitimate children. These proportions are very similar to the entire group of 315, 13% of whom had produced legitimate and 8% illegitimate children.

Concluding, one might say that this survey of successfully discharged imbeciles emphasised the degree of improvement that deprived individuals may make, but also some remarkable successes with those who although remaining at imbecile level, found a niche which satisfied all. Here the patient often replaced a gap in a family who still wished to 'mother' a child, or sometimes an imbecilic gardener made up for lack of prudence and foresight by his pleasant personality characteristics and unremitting toil. Perhaps the best example of current placement of imbeciles comes from the author's Welsh practice, where a Welsh nationalist landlady, resident in the high employment area of Nottingham, shepherds her Welsh-speaking imbeciles about this English city with unremitting zeal. A previous placement of a workhappy man who was, and always had been, without the power of speech, and who was 'carried' by his workmates in the corporation dustbin department, unfortunately came to grief when he reached in through a window and stroked the tresses of a lady combing her hair in her boudoir. Alas! they were so beautiful.

Acknowledgments

I should like to express my thanks to Dr. Prentice, Medical Superintendent of the Royal Western Counties Hospital, for so much help and encouragement during this and other projects at the hospital.

References

Clarke, A. D. B., Clarke and Reimans 1958. Cognitive and Social Changes in feeble-minded. Brit. J. Psychol. (49) 44.
 Craft, M. J., 1959. Personality disorder and dullness. Lancet (1) 856.
 Craft, M. J., 1962. Personality Disorder, Dullness and Delinquency. Brit. J. Criminol. (2) 262.