PATIENTS WHO DISCONTINUE DAY HOSPITALISATION - AN ANALYSIS
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SUMMARY
Treatment discontinuation has been noted as a problem with psychiatric patients. This would equally be the case when long term measures for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill are concerned. In this study of patients who discontinued psychiatric day hospitalisation, it was found that over 90% had dropped out in the first month of treatment. Schizophrenics, Manic Depressives, Epileptics and others contributed to the largest extent to this group whereas Mental Retardates discontinued less often. The discontinued patients either had better prognostic factors and maintained well subsequently (usually Manic Depressives) or relapsed soon after (usually Schizophrenics). The implications of the findings are discussed whilst comparing the discontinuers with those continuing day hospitalisation.

Introduction
Patients dropping out of treatment have received some attention in psychiatric literature. Baekeland et al. (1975), in their review identify several factors affecting dropouts in general and opine that ‘despite spontaneous improvement and entry or re-entry into treatment, on the average the dropout seems to do worse than his counterparts who persevere in treatment’. Bender et al. (1985) studying under attendance in a day centre catering to a largely psychotic population found that 16.6% did not attend at all and a further 25% attended for less than 1/3 of the three month study period. The under attenders had more stable employments but often had personality disorders, more chronic illness, lower self esteem and they less often considered themselves as mentally ill than the ‘stayers’ i.e., those who attended for more than 1/3 of the time.

A sizeable proportion of patients who are referred for day hospitalisation discontinue. It has been observed (Sharma et al. 1985) that many of them do so soon after referral. It was decided to examine the characteristics of the discontinuing patients (DPs) in comparison with those who continue day hospitalisation (CPs) in order to find out if they differ as a group in any way and if their characteristics help in predicting discontinuation.

Material and Methods
The study was conducted in the Psychiatric day hospital facility available at the NIMHANS, Bangalore. Discontinued patients (DPs) were arbitrarily defined as those who stopped attending the Day hospital within three months of their referral, without having undergone the treatment planned for them; whereas the patients continuing treatment (CPs) were those who continued attending the Day hospital for three months or more.

Of the 205 patients referred to the Day hospital during the calendar year from 1.12.1984 to 30.11.1985 a list of DPs was prepared from our registers. Attempts were

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made to contact the patients by letter, telephone or home visit to enquire as to the reasons for discontinuing and motivating to return to treatment. The information thus obtained was supplemented by that collected at the time of original intake, from the patient and key relative on a structured interview proforma and the outpatient records. Similar information regarding the CPs was available to us from our records and the patients themselves.

All the patients had been diagnosed by Consultant Psychiatrists as per ICD-9 at the time of referral and in the Day hospital. Most of the patients had been on follow up at the outpatient facility of the Department of Psychiatry prior to their referral.

The DPs were compared with the CPs on demographic and clinical variables using Chi-Square tests (with Yate's correction where appropriate).

### Results

52 of the 205 patients referred in one year (25.37%) qualified for our definition of DPs. Of these 92.3% had discontinued within the first month after referral and rest in the second month. The population of CPs remained stable in a subsequent four to twelve month follow up.

| Diagnosis                  | DPs(N=52) | CPs(N=153) |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Schizophrenia              | 55.8%     | 32.9%      |
| Mental Retardation         | 13.5%     | 42.5%      |
| Manic Depressive           | 21.1%     | 13.1%      |
| Psychoses                  |           |            |
| Epilepsy and "Other"       | 9.6%      | 12.4%      |

* Other diagnoses include neuroses, alcohol dependance and conduct disorders.

On enquiry regarding the reasons for discontinuing, it was found that 59.6% of DPs discontinued due to their/family’s choice. Amongst the 20 patients who themselves refused, five were Manic Depressives who found jobs elsewhere, one was lost to follow up and the rest returned to outpatient care. Of the latter, six Schizophrenics relapsed within one month of discontinuation. These discontinuers gave ‘lack of interest’, ‘weakness’ and ‘lack of supervision’ as reasons for abstaining. Family refusal was operative in 11 patients of whom eight returned to outpatient care and three sought treatment elsewhere. Their reasons for discontinuation included their objection to the day hospital catering to patients of both sexes and all strata of society and a fear to send female patients out of doors. Of the 12 patients found unsuitable clinically, six were inhospitalised within one week for relapse/exacerbation (three Schizophrenics and three Manics). The rest of the DPs continued treatment at the outpatient.

### Discussion

It is noted that about one quarter of the patients referred for day hospitalisation discontinued within three months, a figure less than that reported by Bender et al. (1985). The diagnostic distribution (Table 1) reveals a proportionately higher representation of Mental Retardates amongst the CPs and Schizophrenics and Manic Depressives amongst the DPs.

On comparing the DPs with the CPs (Table 2) no significant differences were found in age, sex or socioeconomic distribution. The DPs had a significantly higher (p < .01) educational status as there is a lower representation of Mental Retardates amongst them. The DPs were also significantly more often (p < .001) married than CPs. This is as expected from literature as 3/4 of the married DPs were Manic Depressives who constituted 21% of DPs and only 13% of the CPs.
| Characteristic                  | DPs(N-52) % | CPs(N-153) % | Inference Chi-Square |
|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| **1. Sex**                     |             |              |                     |
| Male                           | 59.6        | 69.9         | NS                  |
| Female                         | 40.0        | 30.1         |                     |
| **2. Age**                     |             |              |                     |
| 11 - 30 yrs                    | 84.6        | 72.5         | NS                  |
| 31 - 50 yrs                    | 15.4        | 27.5         |                     |
| **3. Education**               |             |              |                     |
| Nil                            | 17.3        | 37.2         | 10.176, df 2        |
| 1-5 Std                        | 15.4        | 20.3         | p < .01             |
| > 5 Std                        | 67.3        | 42.5         |                     |
| **4. Socioeconomic status**    |             |              |                     |
| Upper-Middle                   | 44.2        | 54.3         | NS                  |
| Lower                          | 55.8        | 45.7         |                     |
| **5. Marital status**          |             |              |                     |
| Married                        | 36.5        | 7.8          | 22.9677, df 1, p < .001 |
| Single                         | 63.5        | 92.2         |                     |
| **6. Family size**             |             |              |                     |
| 1 - 4 members                  | 7.7         | 37.2         | 16.5448, df 1, p < .001 |
| > 4 members                    | 92.3        | 62.8         |                     |
| **7. Family attitude towards patient** |             |              |                     |
| Positive                       | 36.5        | 47.7         | NS                  |
| Negative                       | 55.8        | 49.0         |                     |
| + Not Known                    | 7.7         | 3.3          |                     |
| **8. Family attitude to Day hospitalisation** |     |              |                     |
| Positive                       | 28.8        | 75.2         | 18.928, df 1        |
| Negative                       | 30.8        | 12.4         | p < .001            |
| + Not known                    | 40.4        | 12.4         |                     |
| **9. Past occupation**         |             |              |                     |
| Nil                            | 53.8        | 86.3         | 12.966, df 1, p < .001 |
| Present                        | 46.2        | 15.7         |                     |
| **10. Employment record**      |             |              |                     |
| Adequate                       | 35.8        | 3.9          | 11.683, df 1        |
| Declining                      | 10.4        | 9.8          | p < .001            |
| + Not applicable               | 53.8        | 86.3         |                     |
| **11. Last employed**          |             |              |                     |
| < 2 years ago                  | 15.4        | 3.3          | NS                  |
| 2-5 years ago                  | 21.2        | 8.5          |                     |
| > 5 years ago                  | 9.6         | 1.9          |                     |
| + Never                        | 53.8        | 86.3         |                     |
| **12. Employability (according to family)** |             |              |                     |
| Yes                            | 31.1        | 7.2          | 6.509, df 1, p < .05 |
| No                             | 78.9        | 92.8         |                     |
| **13. Employability (according to patient)** |             |              |                     |
| Yes                            | 30.8        | 12.4         | 9.231, df 1, p < .01 |
| No                             | 69.2        | 87.6         |                     |
| **14. Duration of illness at first contact** |     |              |                     |
| < 5 years                      | 51.9        | 14.4         | 37.528, df 2        |
| 5-10 years                     | 30.7        | 26.1         | p < .001            |
| > 10 years                     | 17.4        | 59.5         |                     |
### Table 3

| Reason for discontinuation of Day hospitalisation | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------|
| Patient refused                              | 38.5       |
| Family refused                               | 21.1       |
| Patient clinically unsuitable                 | 23.1       |
| Distance/change of residence/other reasons mitigating against continued attendance | 17.3       |

The family size of the DPs tended to be significantly larger (p < .001) than of the CPs. Although the families of both the groups seemed to equally often have a negative attitude towards the patients' illness, the families of the DPs significantly more often (p < .001) had a negative attitude towards day hospitalisation as well. These two factors may be contributing to discontinuation by the DPs.

DPs more often (p < .001) had some previous occupational history. When those who were never employed were excluded from the analysis, the DPs had significantly better (p < .001) employment records though the two groups did not significantly differ in their periods of unemployment. In keeping with this, the DPs and their families considered them as employable significantly
significantly more than the CPs. Hence it appears that a better previous occupational history and patient as well as family perception of employability irrespective of duration of recent unemployment may be contributing to discontinuation by the DPs.

The CPs tended to have been ill for longer than the DPs. Part of the difference on this variable may be accounted for by the high proportion of Mental Retardates amongst the CPs. Similarly the shorter duration of treatment at the outpatient prior to referral amongst the CPs may be due to the earlier referral of the Retarded. The statistic on inhospitalisation is vitiated by the large proportion of the Mentally Retarded (who were rarely hospitalised) amongst the CPs.

The DPs suffer from less occupational disability (p < .001) than the CPs. On being referred for day hospitalisation, families of DPs more often had no definite treatment plans for their wards, and to a lesser extent preferred short term programmes in comparison to the long term ones preferred by the families of the CPs. The treating team also advised short term activities more often (p < .001) to DPs. Hence the relatively lesser occupational disability not related to previous rehabilitation efforts and briefer treatment plans for the DPs may be related to the better past employment history and the patient/families' optimistic perception of employability. These factors together may predicate discontinuation.

In comparison with the CPs, the DPs more often seem to suffer from the major psychoses. Discontinuation by those suffering from Schizophrenia may be related to impending relapse whereas the Manic Depressive DPs seem likely to find other occupations/treatments after discontinuing. The Mental retarded seem to continue day hospitalisation more satisfactorily. As a group the DPs tend to come from large families, have a better educational and occupational status, less occupational disability in the past and a more negative attitude to day hospitalisation. They are more often perceived as employable and require shorter duration activity oriented therapies.

The above findings may help in identifying patients who are at risk of discontinuing day hospitalisation at the time of referral itself so as to utilise the limited resources to intervene at the clinical-symptomatological level in the case of those who may discontinue due to imminent relapse; find alternative management for patients who discontinue due to social reasons and set short term goals based on work habit, counselling and guidance only for the better prognosis discontinuers.

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