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Letter from Korea

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It is a privilege and an honor for us to have this opportunity to present some of the activities currently in operation at our Catholic Suicide Prevention Center.

In September of 1962, following some two years of a preliminary study period as to the need for this kind of organization, the center was officially inaugurated as an independent charity, under the Division of Social Medicine, one of the three main services which also includes the Division of Clinical Medicine and the Division of Education which forms the cornerstone of the Catholic Medical Center, perhaps the only self-supporting, non-governmental organization for better human and social welfare in our society of Korea.

ORGANIZATION

The Catholic Suicide Prevention Center organized in 1963 began with a small number of members consisting of two psychiatrists, one trainee, one clinical psychologist on part time basis and one full-time social worker. However, practically all members of the department of psychiatry had gladly shared their time as much as possible for the center; it is located in the annex of the department. At present, the center is fortunate to have a few more members: six psychiatrists in-

cluding three trainees and two psychologists and two social workers. Besides the above mentioned members, there are five full-time nurses who are devoting their professional efforts to those who are brought to the emergency room of the center after ingesting various forms of drugs for suicidal purposes.

ACTIVITIES

The center had received a total of 892 cases (Male: 433, Female: 459) in 1963; 920 cases (Male: 394, Female: 526) in 1964; 890 cases (Male: 378, Female: 512) in 1965 and 1,003 cases (Male: 417, Female: 586) in 1966, a total for the four years of 3,705. Of that number there were 150 (4.05%) deaths. For the remarkably low incidence of death, I should like to express my special gratitude for the devotion and energies offered by our junior staffs.

METHOD OF CONTACT

Our center, from its inception, has been able to draw favorable attention mainly through public medias. A number of telephone calls for help were among the 3,705 attempted suicide cases. Many of the victims were found unconscious by patrol police in the hillside of Nam-San (South Mountain), located at the southern outskirts of Seoul metropolitan area.

LINACRE QUARTERLY

RESEARCH ASPECTS

The research committee of the center includes every professional member involved in the organization as one of the principal activities is to be of service through research. A research form (a punched card) was prepared which includes more than 200 inquiries which is used for the majority of the cases (92%); if there is objection, the questionnaire is omitted. The committee gathers on Saturday and reviews the forms of the week and exchanges views.

PLANS AND NEEDS

1. Establishment of around the clock telephone call service system.

2. Translation of twelve academic articles on suicide written in Korean into English to be published in appropriate international journals.

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