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VA continues one LSD experiment

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Veterans Administration still has one clinical experiment using LSD on humans under way, although most of its programs with the drug were ended five years ago, officials report.

Between 1965 and 1970 a few VA hospitals tested the mindaltering drug in treating alcoholism, neuroses and painful terminal illnesses, but officials said it was decided the program wasn't worth continuing. In response to inquiries from The Associated Press, however, VA officials said there is one remaining program involving an average of two carefully selected mental patients a year at the Topeka, Kan., hospital.

Some experiments with animals are also continuing, officials said.

Dr. Lawrence B. Hobson, deputy assistant director of research and development for the VA, said the human use involves patients who have been hospitalized for long periods and have not responded to other treatment techniques.

He quoted Dr. Kenneth E. Godfrey, the psychiatrist in charge of the Topeka project, as saying he "looks for people who will open up and be receptive, talk back. It doesn't work well with many schizophrenic patients."

Godfrey is carrying out the work with the Meninger Clinic at Topeka.

Other experiments, between 1965 and 1970, were mainly at the VA hospitals at Palo Alto, Calif., Wadsworth, near Los Angeles, and Sheridan, Wyo.

Dr. John D. Chase, the VA's chief medical director since April 16, 1974, said:

"My review of this agency's interest in LSD has established that its use has been a serious effort to determine what application, if any, this substance might have in the treatment of a variety of mental disorders."

The VA officials said that between 1965 and 1970, some 14 of the VA's more than 5,000 trained medical investigators requested and received approval for pharmaceutical research projects involving LSD.

The officials said all of the proposals were received and approved in advance by the official research committee for funding by the VA Department of Medicine and Surgery. They added that all proposals complied with regulations of the Food and Drug Administration.