

APR 29, 1973
Psychiatrists
Angry Over
Burglary

SF Examiner

WASHINGTON — (CST) — News that a psychiatrist's patient files had been burglarized by two of the Watergate conspirators was received with shock and anger yesterday at the American Psychiatric Association offices here.

Spokesmen for the 17,000-member professional group explained that the divulging of conversations between patient and therapist tends to damage the effectiveness of treatment. As a result, psychiatrists guard confidentiality even more jealously than do other medical specialists.

The experience of Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton (D-Mo.) last summer was mentioned in illustration of the need for delicacy in the handling of records where mental treatment is concerned. Eagleton, tapped by Democratic Presidential nominee George S. McGovern as his running mate, was dumped after it became known that he had undergone treatment for depression years earlier.

In an official position paper on confidentiality and privilege that the Psychiatric Association made public several years ago, this statement appears:

"Information obtained in the treatment process and communicated to others may be construed as defamatory."

Consequently, the psychiatric profession has taken a hard line against any transfer or copying of records or notes on treatment of individuals.