

THE NEED OF "A MEDICAL VERIFICATION CENTER"

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In every country there exists, besides the official medical "clan," a group (mostly of ungraduated and unlicensed persons) claiming to have at their disposal healing powers able to cure in cases where official medicine is powerless. Some "healers" work secretly, some openly; some have large practices, others work in slums. There are magnetists, clairvoyants, prayer-healers, dowsers, etc. A high proportion of these unlicensed "healers" are unmistakably swindlers and impostors, whose practice endangers public health. Yet there are some of high moral standing, persons who devote their lives to the service of mankind.

It must be acknowledged that irrational methods do occasionally achieve mysterious, but real, results. Repeatedly, the press reports healing meetings of religious groups or legal proceedings against unlicensed practitioners. Authorities cannot ignore this problem; they must deal firmly with swindlers and quacks, while not overlooking the possibility that there *are* unknown powers of healing employable for the public good. The juridical aspect of the problem suggests that a plan be devised to enable paranormal healers, acting in good faith, to work legally. Physicians and physiologists will be interested to know what happens, biologically. Psychologists, parapsychologists, sociologists and theologians, all with an interest at stake, will ask a common question: "Are there true paranormal healings?"

This basic problem is full of difficulties. There is no present way of checking on these supposed healings. Only rarely is

an all-around medical examination possible. Unassailably documented cases are extremely rare. It would be of utmost interest to have an institute designed to make careful and scientific investigation of paranormal healings.

Such a "medical verification center" should have a governing board of four medical men (including a psychiatrist and a public health officer) and one or two psychologists. Main research work would be carried out by a full time salaried physician, parapsychologically trained and familiar with scientific investigation. He should be assisted by a woman social worker. Extensive publicity should be given, and contact made with groups professing ability for paranormal healing. The staff attitude should be strictly neutral. Results should be a matter of public record and qualified medical men should be encouraged to join in the center's activities.

Publication of valid, conclusive evidence would (1) Show whether paranormal healings are real and whether a psi-factor is present; (2) Show that the "occult" tinge often found is a hindrance to a sound scientific approach; (3) Demonstrate what is valuable or fraudulent in paranormal healing and thus stimulate development of psycho-hygiene; (4) Facilitate public health legislation by providing data concerning paranormal, ungraduated healers; (5) Stimulate interest in parapsychology and its investigations; (6) Influence the negative attitude of official medicine toward parapsychology and the possibility of paranormal healing; and (7) Contribute to better insight by mankind into life itself by exploring an area of human behavior so deeply connected with the basic problems of ethics, theology and anthropology.