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Camarillo State Hospital  
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Camarillo, California  
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[circa 1967]

Camarillo State Hospital is one of fourteen state hospitals in California. The complex of Spanish-style buildings is situated four miles from the City of Camarillo, nine miles from Oxnard, sixteen miles from the City of Ventura and forty miles from Los Angeles.

Most of the patients come from the heavily populated counties of Southern California. The hospital receives, in addition to a large number of voluntary patients, seventy per cent of the patients committed from the Los Angeles County Psychiatric Court and also serves principally the Counties of Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Kern. The Children's Treatment Center of Camarillo State Hospital serves all of Southern California. The first Adolescent Treatment Center was recently opened at Camarillo.

Camarillo received its first patients in 1936. Today, with approximately 3,500 patients under treatment, and staffed by some 2,100 employees, the hospital has an annual budget of almost 20 million dollars, serves an area with an estimated population of five million people. Over half the admissions are voluntary.

In the fiscal year 1966-67, there were 4,652 patients admitted to Camarillo and a far greater number released. As in other California State Hospitals for the mentally ill, intensive treatment at Camarillo is making it possible to discharge patients at a rate faster than the admission rate. The effect of this is a gradual reduction in total patient population in recent years.

Camarillo has a streamlined "one-hour" admission procedure, which supplants the old, often emotionally trying procedures that usually extended over a period of weeks. It was this new concept, along with another program, which won the Bronze Service Achievement Award of the American Psychiatric Association for the hospital. Now, a patient's initial impression of the hospital is a pleasant one. He enters an attractive patio, and is served refreshments while administrative details of the accelerated admission procedure are being carried out.

Each patient at Camarillo is a member of the Patient Association. Each unit has its own Association and sends delegates to the division level which in turn sends delegates to the central group. The Association with staff guidance at all levels, encourages the therapeutic community concept, provides additional areas of socialization and helps the individual patient to accept as much responsibility as possible at the earliest possible time. Association representatives are involved at all levels in working with the staff to design and implement new programs as well as evaluate existing programs.

Among a wide scope of stimulating therapeutic programs at Camarillo, especially noteworthy is the closed-circuit television system which has attracted nationwide attention. While meeting many educational and recreational needs of the patients, the closed-circuit television system has

proved to be a highly unusual and interest-provoking therapy program with widespread impact. Staffed and operated by patients, the system beams its programs into the 95 TV receivers scattered throughout the hospital's patient areas.

Much of the programming is built on ideas designed to motivate patients into other treatment activities. Many withdrawn patients begin to open up when they find themselves participating in a group discussion in front of the cameras. This often represents the first step in reaching the patient with other forms of treatment. Other rehabilitation facilities and programs center around the auditorium, gym, swimming pool, golf-driving range, bowling alley, new canteen and include a wide variety of off-ground activities.

The medical staff at Camarillo, in addition to Psychiatrists and Neurologists, includes specialists in neuropathology, pathology, radiology, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, urology, physical medicine, anesthesiology and pediatrics, with Board members heading each of the departments.

Consultants in all specialties are also included on the staff and visit the hospital regularly, either to care for special cases or to take part in various training programs.

Concurrent with the opening of the new Admission Suite, the hospital embarked on a program of training and supervisory effort aimed at extending an active therapy program to every hospital unit. This has resulted in the hospital's being able to assign newly admitted patients to every unit in the hospital on a rotating basis. New training developments were important as part of this effort.

Training programs operate continuously throughout the hospital. The psychiatric residency program has been expanded. A new orientation and training program was started for non-clinical employees. Improvements were made in the basic training course for psychiatric technician trainees. New training sessions in the remotivation techniques were inaugurated for nursing personnel. Special classes in physical therapy techniques were organized. The quality of training programs in all clinical departments has resulted in recognition for the hospital and affiliation with 14 colleges and universities from the undergraduate through the pre-doctoral level. Educational activities include relationships with a wide variety of Southern California teaching institutions as well as programs and seminars designed for the professional. In the course of a year over 3,000 people will visit the hospital for educational purposes.

Worthy of special note is the fact that Camarillo State Hospital has been selected by the Medical School Education Council of the University of California at Los Angeles to share in psychiatric training of the University's senior medical students.

All clinical departments at Camarillo State Hospital carry out intensive in-service training programs and make extensive use of training consultants in keeping their staff members apprised of new developments and changing trends.

Camarillo has been the leader in encouraging a close working relationship with the community through its extensive volunteer organizations, cooperative programs with mental health associations, and by providing follow-up services to discharged patients.

The hospital's Superintendent-Medical Director has been named Director of the South Coast Service Area which includes the Counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Kern and the major portion of Los Angeles County. The Director of the South Coast Service Area has administrative responsibility for the Los Angeles State Mental Hygiene Clinics and the Los Angeles Day Treatment Center in addition to the hospital. The clinics provide pre-screening and after-care services, while the Day Treatment Center provides these services plus intensive psychiatric treatment, and both are involved in training and research programs. Such after-care services help the former patient make the transition from the hospital to community life with less difficulty, and provide short-term emergency psychiatric care in the event of a recurrence of symptoms aimed at preventing the patient's re-admission to the hospital. The development of the service area concept is aimed at providing a higher level of service and greater continuity of service for those people in need of psychiatric care in this large segment of Southern California.

The hospital's research program is engaged in a wide variety of basic and applied subjects, both funded and non-funded. In addition to the work done by the nucleus of research personnel and project staffs, all professional staff members are encouraged to become involved in some form of research, with consultation provided from this department.

Camarillo State Hospital is now embarking on a program for mentally retarded patients within its Division of Retardation Services. A wide variety of specialized programs are available for up to 500 patients. The hospital's work in operant conditioning is being greatly expanded in this area through the use of a "token economy." In addition, this group of patients will have the benefit of the hospital's extensive rehabilitation facilities and the broad range programs for which Camarillo has become known.

The hospital publishes a quarterly journal to which personnel at all levels are encouraged to contribute papers describing programs in which they are involved. The quarterly is dedicated to the end that new concepts and treatment philosophies developed in this setting, which encourage creativity, can be shared with colleagues in the mental health field.