

# He takes mental health crusade to villages of South America

The lessons taught by an Oakland University instructor may affect the mental health delivery system of Peru over the next few years.

Psychiatrist Jeffrey Kotler of Farmington Hills, a visiting associate professor of counseling, is teaching family counseling techniques to Peruvian mental health providers. Although family counseling is an accepted practice in the U.S., it is revolutionary to the Peruvian mental health system. Kotler is opening the way for thousands of Peruvians to receive mental health care for the first time.

Kotler has taught in Lima twice and both trips were sponsored by the Fulbright Scholarship program. His first visit from August 1982 to January 1983 was a success, and he was invited to return.

His recent two-week lecture tour attracted 400 of Peru's top psychiatrists and psychologists. The Peruvian Psychological Association has invited Kotler back, and he plans to continue his lecture program there in late 1984.

"IN MY first trip, I encountered so much resistance to my ideas about short-term interventions in mental health," he said. "Now it has been so gratifying to return one year later and

discover that most of the theories and techniques I introduced to Peru have become incorporated into their treatment strategies.

"It is the perfect dream of any teacher: to make a difference in the world, especially in a Third World country struggling for its very existence."

Until Kotler's first visit, mental health care was reserved for the wealthy and those classified as "psychotic." It was not uncommon for mental health problems of ordinary citizens to go untreated and blossom into serious illnesses. His goal is to make treatment available to anyone.

One of the problems Kotler faces is rooted in society itself. In Peru, a common belief is that only the family or the church should provide personal guidance. Kotler's answer has been to involve the entire family in the counseling sessions, thereby enabling the doctor to reach the one person who needs the treatment most.

The methods of helping families handle a mental illness include changing the power structure to give authority back to the parents and improving communications to stress sensitivity, rather than aggressiveness.

The importance of getting through to the family, Kotler said, is that even if



Dr. Jeffrey Kotler

a person becomes insane, he is likely to remain in the home. Mental hospitals are restricted to only a few, primarily persons associated with police or military personnel.

PERUVIANS HAVE been skeptical

of Kotler's ideas, just as they are wary of all suggestions from North Americans, he said. "They try these things with a suspicious attitude." That negativism is a check, however, in that doctors do not blindly carry out Kotler's ideas without regard for whether they will work.

My role is just to introduce the ideas and theirs is to adapt them to Peruvian reality."

A problem Peruvian doctors face is accommodating three distinct population groups. The family problems of the jungle, mountain and urban people differ widely and individual solutions must be found. The situation is comparable to what U.S. doctors would have if people from Hawaii, Alaska and New York City suddenly found themselves living together, he says.

To continue the education of Peruvian doctors, an effort will be made to bring a Peruvian mental health provider to Oakland University for further training in counseling. The trip can be arranged through the Fulbright Scholarship program, the Peruvian would arrive here in Sept. 1985, Kotler said, and begin working toward a master's degree.

Kotler is director of his own Woodcreek Clinic in Farmington Hills.



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## Programs highlighted for the handicapped

The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission has developed a resource guide of recreational programs in Oakland County for handicapped residents.

The directory, compiled by the Oakland County Parks therapeutic recreation staff, includes more than 125 listings of Oakland County agencies providing recreation assistance or programs for the handicapped.

Each listing outlines the purpose of the organization, programs it offers and participants it serves. Addresses and phone numbers are also provided.

Among the types of organizations included in the resource guide are community and special education programs, YMCA's, Special Olympics, performing arts programs, youth assistance groups, churches, libraries, hospitals and health agencies.

Bowling lanes and swimming pools in Oakland County which are accessible for the handicapped are also listed.

"We would like to see the therapeutic recreation area of the Oakland County Parks become an information resource center for the handicapped," said Monica Walch, therapeutic recreation coordinator.

Since the directory will be updated every six months, it has not been published for distribution. All of the information may be obtained by phone.

In addition, applications are being accepted for a discount recreation card for the permanently disabled in Oakland County. To be eligible for the card, applicants must be age 18 or older, permanently disabled and meet other requirements.

The pass will permit free entry to

the Oakland County day-use parks Monday through Friday and provide discounts for many facilities.

For more information on the handicap resource guide or applications for the recreation discount card, phone 858-1441 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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