

CHART 6.—USE OF MAJOR CLASSES OF PSYCHOTROPIC AGENTS BY DESIRED ACTION (1968)¹

Desired action	Major tranquilizers	Minor tranquilizers	Anti-depressants	Stimulants	Sedatives	Hypnotics
Tranquilization.....	36	43-58	1-6		7	
Sedation.....	16	20-27	0-4		68	
Antidepression.....	2		80-85	5		
Antiemetic.....	18					
Anticonvulsant.....					14	
Antihypertension.....					3	
Antiinsomnia.....						88
Antiobesity.....				90		

¹ Representative drugs of the class and not the entire class tabulated.

Source: National Disease and Therapeutic Index of Lea & Associates.

Dr. LEVINE. The minor tranquilizer class is prescribed 70 to 78 percent of the time for tranquilization or sedation while the previous table showed that by diagnostic categories the minor tranquilizers were prescribed for mental disorders only 25 to 34 percent of the time. Likewise, in the sedative class, while these are prescribed only 10 percent of the time for mental disorders, the desired therapeutic action is tranquilization or sedation 75 percent of the time. Hypnotic drugs are used almost exclusively for sleep induction while the vast use of stimulant drugs is for appetite suppression to aid in weight reduction with 5 percent of stimulant drug prescribing aimed at relief of depression. The conclusion drawn is that psychological or psychiatric symptomatology occurs to a large extent in patients who are not diagnosed as having a mental disorder and physicians prescribing reflects the treatment of these symptoms in patients who are not primarily mentally ill.

The data presented so far on the question of "For what are psychotropic drugs prescribed?" have only been for the year 1968. But what has been the trend over the past several years? Data on this question unfortunately are not available for each of the separate major classes of psychotropic agents but for a conglomerate grouping referred to as ataraxics consisting primarily of the classes major¹ and minor tranquilizers. Data on this topic are available from the year 1960. The percent of prescriptions for ataraxics written for conditions diagnosed as mental disorders between 1960 and 1968 has fluctuated very mildly between 31 and 41 percent. In 1968 the percentage stood at an intermediate 37 percent. The distribution of subdiagnoses within mental disorders—as listed in chart 5—over the past 5 years indicates that there has been little change in this aspect of psychotropic drug therapy.

Considering desired actions of the ataraxics over the 8-year period between 1960 and 1967, we find that, if anything, there has been an increase from a low of 73 percent in 1960 to a high of 85 percent in 1967 for indications dealing with mental symptomatology. This 85-percent figure for desired actions pertaining to mental symptoms can be contrasted with the 39-percent use of psychotropes in patients who were diagnosed as having mental disorders. Taking both these figures into consideration, we again conclude that psychotropic drugs are being prescribed overwhelmingly for psychiatric symptomatology but a large part of this symptomatology is occurring in patients with diag-

¹ Prochlorperazine is included in this class.