History of the Treatment of the Mentally Ill

Many names, Same Disorders

- It has only been in the last 60 years or so that we have begun to categorize and label the various psychological disorders that exist today.

- However, these disorders have existed for hundreds, if not thousands of years, only under different names.
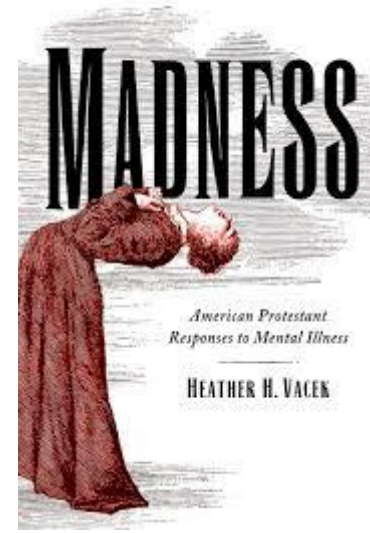
Hundreds of Disorders

- Today the DSM-5 categorizes and labels literally hundreds of different disorders, however, in the past, fewer diagnoses were used to describe a variety of symptoms.

Historical Names

- For example:

- *Madness* – a general term used to describe mental illness, particularly in those who seemed to have lost touch with reality

- *Hysteria* – a diagnosis primarily in women who were "overly emotional" and whose emotions were out of control or "hysterical"

- *Melancholy* or *Melancholia* – a term used to describe sadness or depression

The Middle Ages

- During the Middle Ages the Church had a huge influence over people's lives and this impacted their views of mental illness.
- If a person acted mentally ill then something bad must have happened to their soul.

It must be the work of the Devil

- They believed that negative behaviors were caused by the devil and therefore any mental abnormality must be due to demonic possession,
- The "cure", therefore involved driving out these spirits.

Exorcism

- A religious ceremony performed to cast out evil spirits possessing you.

Other "Cures"

- If exorcism was not successful then the next form of treatment would involve making the possessed individual so uncomfortable that the demon would not want to remain there.

- Thus, torturous treatments were often used to "drive the devil out"

- Of course, none of these methods actually worked and often times killed the person

Trepanation

Drilling holes in the skull to let the demons out
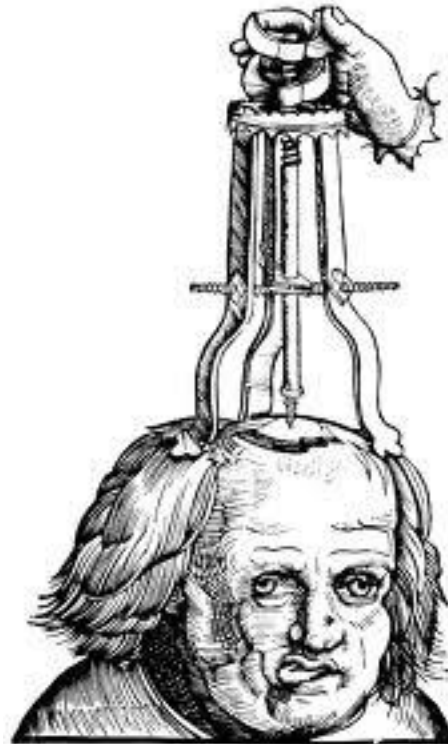
Bloodletting

- Draining the blood to get the evil out (which was believed to be contained in your bodily fluids).

Treatment or Torture?

- Beatings, floggings, and other cruel methods of torture were used to drive out evil or bring the person "back to their senses."

Witchcraft and Sorcery

- Many young women and teenage girls with mental illness were accused of being witches and hanged, drowned, or burned at the stake.

1800s

- "Treatment" was still little to none.
- People were locked away from the rest of society.
- Done for the protection of society *not* the well being of the patients.

How does this help?

- This chair was developed 200 years ago. It was believed that the restraint and restricted sensation it provided would help patients regain their self-control.

Insane Asylums

- Most sufferers of mental disorders throughout history have not been treated as patients, but rather as prisoners.
- Asylums operated as prisons, not a hospital, where people were chained to the walls and neglected.

Entertainment

Many Derogatory Names

- Mental Institutions have been referred to by many derogatory names over the years:
  - Madhouse
  - Lunatic Asylum (falsely believed behaviors were caused by the phases of the moon)
  - Loony Bin
  - Funny Farm
  - Nut House
  - Sanitarium
  - and Snake Pit … to name just a few

Bedlam

- Probably the most Famous mental institution of all in London that was known for its chaos & disorder
- Its infamous history has inspired several horror films

Philippe Pinel – French physician who believed they shouldn't be chained and locked up like zoo animals – pushed for humane treatment rather than institutionalized brutality

Humane treatment

- Pinel and other reformers helped change Europe's view of psychological disorders

1st Institutions in America

- Psychiatric institutions first appeared in the United States **during the Colonial era** as a result of urbanization, according to the website of the U.S. Surgeon General.

- *Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum*, built in New York at the beginning of the 19th century, was the first municipal mental hospital in the United States, according to the American Journal of Psychiatry.

Blackwell's Island Lunatic Asylum

Dorothea Dix

- Much like Pinel in France, she helped change the public's view of the mentally ill and helped establish dozens of mental institutions across America after the Civil War

Warehousing

- The policy of rounding up the mentally ill and simply storing them away from society and leaving them in institutions for the rest of their lives

Treatment for the Rich

- Those privileged members of society who could afford it were often able to avoid the institutions that were crammed full with the poor

- However, they still turned to other seemingly bizarre treatments such as hypnosis, first introduced by in the late 1700's Franz Mesmer (from whom we get the term "mesmerized").

"Nervous Sleep"

- Hypnotism predated psychological study, but was first described in clinical terms in the 19th century.

Hypnotism

- It was employed as a diagnostic and treatment tool by some of the earliest pioneers of the field of psychology, including Sigmund Freud, who eventually fell out of favor with the practice. Even today, hypnotism is promoted with the promise of **helping patients with sleep disorders, nicotine addiction, depression, and a whole range of diseases and conditions**.

1900s

- Although conditions began to improve, the belief that patients were undesirable and dangerous persisted.

- Asylums were replaced by the "modern" psychiatric hospital.

Psychiatric Hospitals

- *Patient care* became a higher priority for mental health professionals instead of simply corralling patients into a facility to segregate them from society
- What were once called **lunatic asylums gave way to psychiatric hospitals.**

- An abandoned asylum, like *Northern State Hospital for the Insane* (pictured above), still conveys an eerie quality as though still haunted by the patients who used to be kept there.

From Confinement to Treatment

- Mental health asylums gradually transformed into institutions that went **from confining those with mental health disorders to treating them**, and psychiatrists **began experimenting with different therapies** for treating a range of diseases.