

## TEACHING MATERIALS IN FORENSIC PSYCHIATRY

by

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Visual aids which offer an excellent means of communicating effect as well as content, have become increasingly more important in teaching. Their use in the courtroom, where it is important to "get the idea understood by the jury," has also proven valuable. This same need to have ideas understood, of course, applies to our teaching efforts. Facts can be read in books, but feelings and experiences can generally best be conveyed verbally, either directly or by tapes or films.

The William S. Merrell Company, in conjunction with the American Medical Association, American Bar Association, and the American Hospital Association, has produced eight medico-legal films useful for various educational efforts. Films are furnished free of charge on your choice of dates, although the recipient is responsible for return postage. A brochure describing these with an order form is readily available from Merrell at the address given below. The films are all 16 mm, sound, black and white, except for one in color, produced professionally, and are of excellent quality. I have seen all of these films and have used several of them in teaching psychiatric residents and medical students, and plan to use at least one for a medico-legal seminar in the Law School.

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FILMS: (Film Library, The Wm. S. Merrell Company, 1269 Gest St.,  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45203)

The series includes films on malpractice, the Medical Examiner, testifying, drug errors, etc. I thought the readers of the Bulletin would be interested in my review of these films.

"Next Witness," the most recent film in this series, was produced in 1969 in conjunction with the Committee on Medical-Legal Problems of the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association. Running twenty-four minutes, it is the only color film in the series.

The patients utilized in "Next Witness" are those suffering from "whiplash" injury, and the doctors testifying are orthopedists. The film covers the entire process from the receiving of the subpoena through the pre-trial conference with the attorney to the actual appearance in court of the doctor and the presentation of his testimony. Excellent examples of "bad" testimony and "good" testimony are presented. The story of the proper way to testify is effectively told and is easily applicable to psychiatric testimony. This is an example of a picture being worth a thousand words, and lends itself to discussion of the entire subject of testifying in court. I regularly use this film as part of my lecture series to psychiatric residents and would encourage all teachers of forensic psychiatry to review it.

"The Medical Witness" runs for thirty-four minutes and was produced several years ago. It is similar to "Next Witness," presenting the story of "proper" and "improper" ways of testifying in an appropriate and adequate manner.

"The Man Who Didn't Walk," a thirty-two minute film, presents an excellent story of a case of traumatic neurosis and the medico-legal problems that arise from such cases. The story is that of a man who is injured in an automobile accident and develops a traumatic neurosis. He is unable to walk without the use of crutches, yet there are no physical findings which can anatomically or physiologically support such muscle weakness. The film reveals the story of the injury, subsequent medical and psychiatric examinations followed by legal conferences with the defense and plaintiff psychiatrists. The case then goes to court where the plaintiff's psychiatrist states that the patient has a traumatic neurosis while the defense psychiatrist states that the patient is basically a neurotic individual who is looking for some secondary gain and, in fact, may be malingering. As is frequently the case in real life, the issues are not clear-cut. This film leaves the final decision of the jury undetermined so that the audience can make its own decisions.

"The Silent Witness" runs for twenty-eight minutes and presents the trial of an alcoholic driver. This film reveals the use of chemical tests for determining intoxication and how they have been perfected for use by law enforcement officers, lawyers, and doctors. This should be an excellent film for use in conjunction with a law school class, both in terms of the admissibility of chemical tests as evidence and the general problem of alcoholism.

"A Matter of Fact," running thirty minutes, is the story of "an innocent man who is nearly indicted for murder."

This is a medical "who done it" which depicts the necessity of having trained, experienced, competent people in the coroner's or medical examiner's office. The complete postmortem examination prevents a serious miscarriage of justice. An excellent film for a medical-legal course in law school.

"No Margin For Error" is described in the Merrell brochure on these films as candidly presenting case histories that deal with major causes of in-hospital liability action such as mix-up in patient identification, error in medication dosage, and loss of a sponge during surgery. The film runs thirty minutes and could be of use to a nursing class or intern group discussing malpractice.

"An Ounce of Prevention" vividly portrays the many factors contributing to medication errors. This film runs twenty-six minutes and depicts the problems that can arise out of illegible handwriting, confusing dosage forms, etc. Again, a useful film for nursing groups and hospital staff.

Merrell also has a film on dental malpractice entitled, "Jeopardy--A Story of Dental Malpractice" which would be useful for dental school teaching.

Try some of these; I think you will like them.