

They still beat mental patients

By GEORGE FINDLAY

As an out-patient at a mental hospital, I know that hospital staff still use beatings and other forms of violence to get patients to do as they want. Sometimes violence is used for its own sake, not as a way to motivate a patient.

These are people who say they condemn violence.

Doctors, nurses, hospital public relations staff, the fact-finding reporter all want what is best for the patient. But the mental patient is considered irrelevant. So who listens to us? Most people dismiss what a patient has to say.

Ten years ago, after serving a prison sentence, I was sent to an institute for the criminally insane in Penatung, Ontario. I was only there two days when I saw attendants beating a patient to get him to do as they wanted.

"Brush your teeth." No answer from the patient. One of the attendants hauls back and punches the dissenting patient squarely in the mouth.

I reported it.

A few days later a patient would not get up and leave his 'room' (we were not allowed to call a cell a cell). An attendant went in and twisted the patient's arm until the person screamed in pain.

"Now get up when I tell you," the attendant said, then he twisted the man's arm again.

Again, I reported it and I wrote to the Toronto Star about it.

Reporters from the Star came to the institute. But because I was a person who complained of violence by attendants I was kept locked in my room, so I could not speak with the reporters.

"If the patients hit us we hit back harder."

I complained to the head psychiatrist. He said, "If the patients hit us, we hit back harder." "It is not us hitting the attendants," I said. "It's them hitting us to get us to do as they want."

Update, Riverview hospital, 1982.



Findlay: "I reported it."

Psychiatric Institute in Port Coquitlam being dragged down the hall by the hair.

I have witnessed a nurse at the University of British Columbia hospital karate chop a cerebral palsied patient in the throat for acting up, not doing what she wanted.

A friend of mine entered hospital to report she had been raped. She was bruised and no one listened. Mental patients' comments are irrelevant.

Most mental patients are too ashamed at being in a mental hospital to want to talk about beatings and brutality. They don't want people to know they were there or they don't want to talk about it because it upsets them to think about or remember it.

Mental patients have to start talking about this violence and people have to start listening and doing something about it.

I saw a nurse stick fingernail clippers under an old lady's fingernail. The old lady yelled and the nurse said menacingly, "Now shut up or it can happen again."

I reported it. I have also watched an inmate of the Forensic