

A GROWING, BUT CURABLE PROBLEM

The Editor examines a subject many would rather ignore — MENTAL ILLNESS.

If there is one sickness affecting a large number of the population, but regarded as unmentionable, other than in derisive or jocular terms, it is mental illness.

It can affect workers in every type of occupation and applies equally to those with an outdoor job as it does to those confined to the office or factory.

The Health and Safety Executive whose work is well known in the field of industrial safety have recently published guidelines to employers highlighting the tell-tale signs that managers should be aware of so they can take action before the illness becomes chronic.

Golf Greenkeeping is aware of a case, where a member of greenstaff, showed all the classic symptoms of depression. His colleagues suspected that he had problems, but they did not appreciate just how desperate he had become, or how they could help him.

He was well-liked, had served the club for a number of years, was a reliable worker, but quiet and withdrawn. A bit of a "loner", said one of his work-mates.

When he failed to arrive at work one Monday morning, they were not too concerned, but after he missed the next day without even a telephone call, colleagues did become worried and called at his house. The milk was on the step, the curtains drawn and there was no reply to their knocking.

Eventually the police were called, the house broken into and another case of suicide became the subject of a Coroner's Inquest.

The greenstaff and club officials were absolutely shattered. Why did it happen? They knew he had been

somewhat withdrawn of late, but he was financially secure, had no money worries, was a single man without any responsibilities and appeared to be fit and healthy. There seemed to be no logical reason for him to take his own life.

Mental illness is of course illogical, which is the main reason why those who do not suffer from mental stress and depression cannot appreciate the torment endured by the growing number of people who do.

The individual may not be aware that all is not well, but those who work with him certainly will. The signs all relate to changes in a pattern of behaviour such as:-

Irritability, quick tempered flare-ups.

Resentment of advice and constructive criticism.

Being unsociable and withdrawn.

Consistent late arrival at work.

Failing to carry out instructions.

Deterioration in personal appearance.

Involvement in minor accidents.

Increasing consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and coffee.

Trivial excuses for absence from work.

In extreme cases the distress is shown by uncontrollable weeping, the smell of alcohol taken before coming to work and a sense of hopelessness shown by an inability to cope with even the simplest tasks.

If those in a management role suspect all is not well with an individual, they have a responsibility to face the problem head on. It is no use ignoring the situation, hoping it will cure itself.

The first step is to adopt a sympathetic approach and

encourage the colleague to talk about his problems, but obviously away from the ears of others. Often reassurance about job security helps, but it is essential he is promised the confidentiality of any discussions about personal problems — and that promise is kept.

The manager's job is to persuade his staff member to seek medical advice. To go to his doctor, who will diagnose the extent of his illness and perhaps refer him to a specialist for treatment.

If this does not succeed, then he must be told, his illness is causing concern and

will be referred up the management chain to senior officials, who will need to contact his doctor direct.

Mental illness can be cured in exactly the same way as other illnesses, provided prompt treatment is given. A cut finger is stitched, a broken leg re-set. In the same way stress and depression can be treated and the patient restored to full health.

Mental anguish is hell for the sufferer, but it is others who must recognise the symptoms and act with a positive approach of compassion and sympathetic understanding.

TORO CONTRACT HIRE PLAN

The TORO Company has just introduced a Contract Hire Plan which is available on all their Groundmaster product range. This will be of particular interest to local Authorities because it will allow them to fund grass cutting machinery from annual revenue budgets as opposed to capital budgets.

Under this 3 year fixed cost scheme, the customer will have the security of knowing that the equipment will be professionally maintained on a planned basis, thereby providing worry-free

operation during the whole period of the scheme. The plan not only covers unlimited use of any machine but also regular service inspections.

TORO say it is their intention to extend the scheme to other products ranges in the future.

Further and more detailed information can be obtained from any TORO appointed dealer or from Graham Dale, TORO Sales Manager, Lely (UK) Ltd, Station Road, St. Neots, Cambs PE19 1QH. Telephone 0480 76971.

COURSES IN TURF MANAGEMENT

The Sports Turf Research Institute will hold three courses at Bingley in autumn 1988 on the theory and practice of turf construction and management. The courses last five days (Monday to Friday) and will cover soils, grasses, turf diseases and pests, drainage, watering, fertilizers and machinery. The commencing dates are 17th October,

24th October and 31st October. The fee is £100 for members and £120 for non members plus VAT (exclusive of accommodation and meals).

Further details from the Secretary, Sports Turf Research Institute, Bingley, West Yorkshire BD16 1AU. Telephone Bradford (0274) 565131.