

Duke University Medical Center Intercom

VOL. 25, NO. 23

JUNE 9, 1978

DURHAM, N.C.

Garden complements library's historical collection

By David Williamson

Young minds aren't the only things being cultivated this spring at the Medical Center Library.

Staff members there are also growing aphrodisiacs and cures for cancer, nightmares and baldness.

Don't get your hopes up though. Their products are not for sale, and they probably wouldn't work anyway, according to Terry Cavanagh, curator of the library's historical collection.

The project is a special medical garden filled with plants that throughout history have been accorded special healing virtues. Cavanagh calls it more of a curiosity than anything else.

"No, most of the plants won't do you any good, but most of them won't do you any harm either," he said. "We didn't put out anything really dangerous like belladonna (deadly nightshade) although it has more authentic uses than many of the others."

Tree of Hippocrates

The garden, which was planted last spring, occupies a pair of large wooden tubs on the northwest terrace of the Seeley G. Mudd Building.

Two plane trees grown from seedlings that were presented to the School of Medicine in 1973 dominate the tubs. Susan Carlton Smith, conservator of the historical collection and unofficial chief gardener, said the seedlings came from the Tree of Hippocrates on the Greek Island of Cos.

Hippocrates, a physician who lived from around 460-377 B.C. and has been called "the father of medicine," is said to have instructed students under the tree, Smith explained. Currently, however, the legend received more support from promoters of the Greek tourist industry than from medical historians.

Ancient herbs

Around the plane trees, which are related to the sycamores found in this

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GOOD FOR ALL ILLS—Susan Carlton Smith and Terry Cavanagh check on the growth of plants in the medical garden. The garden is filled with

plants that throughout history have been accorded special healing virtues. (Photo by Thad Sparks)

Center helps parents avoid bewilderment

A developmental disability in a child is not an easy thing for parents to accept. And the child's adjustment to a disability can be hindered because the parents do not understand the disability.

Yet interpreting the evaluations of

different specialists and integrating them into applicable information about the child's disability can confuse and bewilder many parents.

The Duke Developmental Evaluation Center (DEC) is one of 19 clinics in North Carolina established by the state in 1964 to help evaluate disabled children and work with the parents in understanding the child's disability. It is funded by a contract from the N.C. State Department of Human Resources with Duke's Department of Pediatrics.

Team approach

Because disabilities often overlap into more than one developmental area, evaluating the disability requires using several different professionals. The DEC uses the interdisciplinary team approach to evaluate diagnostically, plan and consult with children and their families who have special needs.

Therefore, several professionals may evaluate a child's abilities but they function together as a team in reaching an understanding of the child's problems and in making recommendations.

Short-term intervention

"We use the interdisciplinary approach to establish what the disability is because it is difficult for any problem to be isolated in only one aspect of a child's life," said

Doris Gothard, educational coordinator at the DEC.

The DEC's are designed to offer short-term intervention in working with children who are suspected of having a problem in one or more areas of development such as learning, muscle coordination, speech and behavior.

"We evaluate a variety of special needs in children," Gothard said. "Learning disabilities, language and speech disorders, emotional problems and physical difficulties such as cerebral palsy."

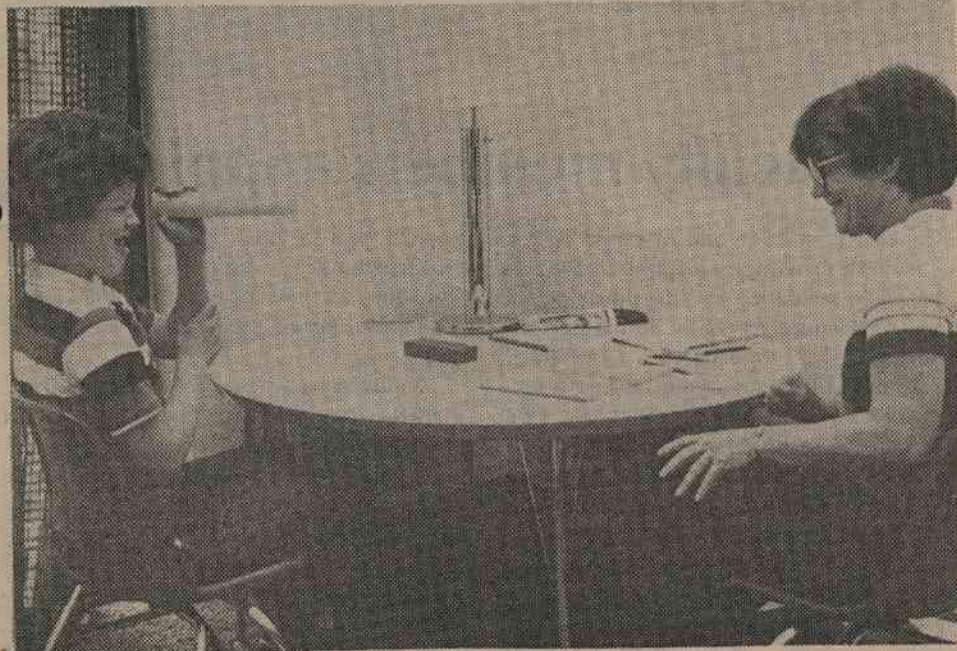
The Duke DEC staff has professional representatives from pediatrics, social work, education, speech and language and clinical psychology. And because it is contracted to Duke through the pediatrics department, the DEC has access to other services such as psychiatry and neurology on a consulting basis.

Try to prevent major problems

People up to 21 years of age who live in Chatham, Durham, Orange, Person, Granville and Vance counties are eligible for evaluation at the Duke DEC.

"Our caseload is largely concentrated on the 0-8 year olds," Gothard said. "In that way we hope to intervene at a point

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LAND HO!—Toys and games are used by the staff of the Developmental Evaluation Center (DEC) in screening children who are suspected of having some type of disability. Doris Gothard, educational coordinator at the DEC, watches as a child plays with one of the diagnostic toys — a plastic cylinder used to determine eye dominance.