TECHNICAL NOTE

A USEFUL PORTABLE TIMER¹

The Memo-Timer, manufactured in Switzerland, has been found extremely useful in reminding both patient and treatment staff of the elapse of critical time periods. The timer, which functions similarly to an alarm clock can be set from 5 to 60 min and has a buzzer that sounds for 2 sec. Weighing barely an ounce, the timer can be attached to a belt, worn inside a pocket, or pinned to the clothing.

Nixon (1970) suggested its use and reports success in one instance where an over-indulgent grandmother was programmed to approach her grandchild only after a specific elapsed time signalled by the timer. We have found it helpful as a cue to nursing personnel to begin behavioral observations, in the self-management of behavior, in implementing group reinforcement contingencies, and as an aid in teaching retarded patients to conceptualize time, *e.g.*, when to return to the ward or begin ward tasks.

Table 1 presents results of accuracy tests on one of the timers. Ten trials were conducted for each setting. The first column of the table shows the average error for the timer's labelled settings. Due to the obvious inaccuracy of the timer at these settings, additional tests were conducted at points midway between the labelled setting and the next 5-min interval (settings are in 5-min intervals). Results of these tests indicated that the timer was accurate to within 1 min, suggesting that it is useful when a fine degree of accuracy is not required. Our experience with the timers has been that

they run faster than indicated and should always be tested to find the most reliable settings.

The Memo-Timer is imported by Charles Alshuler Co. (Exclusive U.S. Importer) Box 3720, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53217 and costs \$3.95 postpaid. Delivery time is relatively short and the timer is available in a choice of four colors.

Fig. 1. Photograph of the Memo-Timer slightly less than one-half life size.

Table 1
Accuracy Scores for a Single Memo-Timer

Labelled Setting	Average Error	Approximate Midpoint between Labelled Settings	Average Error
5 min	2 min, 15 sec	7.5 min	16.5 sec
10	2 min, 55 sec	12.5	29.5
15	2 min, 2 sec	17.5	14.5
30	2 min, 9 sec	32.5	17.5
45	2 min, 55 sec	47.5	19.0
60	1 min, 45 sec		

¹The opinions or conclusions stated in this paper are those of the authors and are not to be construed as official or as necessarily reflecting the policy of the Department of Mental Hygiene.

²Now at the Behavior Research Laboratory, Anna State Hospital, Anna, Illinois 62906.

REFERENCES

- Nixon, S. *Helping teachers and parents acquire skills in the use of behavior modification*. Paper presented at the twenty-third Annual Convention, California State Psychological Association, Monterey, California, 1970.

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