

Spiders and monkeys . . . just part of research

The Department's mental health research is not limited to North Carolina—there were spiders in space aboard Skylab and now monkeys in Puerto Rico will be testing marijuana.

Dr. Peter Witt, pharmacologist and director of the Research Section of the Division of Mental Health Services, and Dr. John Vandenberg, an experienced animal research scientist, have been awarded a grant to study the effects of marijuana on monkeys in a controlled social setting. This research is the first of its kind.

Research will be done in cooperation with two pharmacologists from the Richmond Medical College. The experiments are tentatively set to start Nov. 1, 1973.

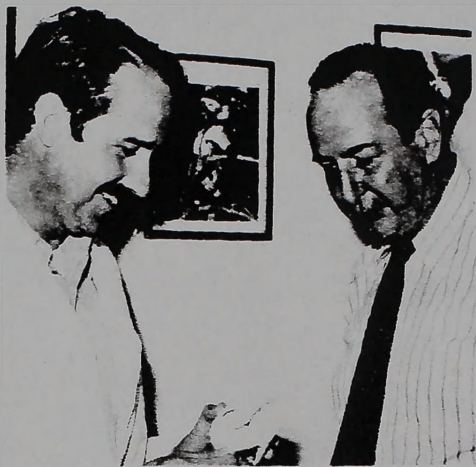
The federal grant of \$146,000 from the National Institute of Mental Health, to be used over a three-year period, will be administered by the N.C. Foundation for Mental Health Research, Inc. Host for the study is the Caribbean Primate Research Institute. Pathological tests to determine the physiological effects of the marijuana on the monkeys will be conducted by the University of Puerto Rico.

By using a subhuman subject, the rhesus monkey of India, in their experimental setting located on a small island near the fishing village of La Parguera in southwestern Puerto Rico, scientists will be able to manipulate the monkeys while still allowing them considerable freedom in a natural setting.

This particular study is unique in that it will

equipment, his or her prime responsibility is usually helping the client to accept and to adjust to his limitations.

Certainly a severe physical impairment can change



Dr. John Vandenberg (left) and Dr. Peter Witt examine the skull of a monkey.

attempt to determine if and how marijuana affects a social setting as a mini society with a social hierarchy similar to that of humans. In the past studies have dealt mainly with how drugs affect learning tasks and work efficiency.

Their laboratories are located at Dorothea Dix Hospital, although Dr. Vandenberg makes numerous trips to Puerto Rico, working closely with the monkey colony since it was first set up in 1962. Dr. Witt will concentrate on analyzing films of the monkeys and comparing movement using various film speeds.