

FOR TRANS-SEXUALS

Stanford Thinking About Sex Surgery

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STANFORD—Plastic surgeons are thinking of offering complete sex-change operations at Stanford University Hospital.

The service would expand the hospital's existing series of minor adjustments to change-over operations done at other hospitals. Hospital spokesmen say four persons have had such "adjustment" surgery in the past two years.

The people, known as "trans-sexuals," are those nature has transformed into a cross between a man and a woman.

Trans-sexuals have either a male or female physique but feel emotionally like a member of the opposite sex. Psychiatry apparently is of no help to them.

According to Dr. Donald Laub, a plastic surgeon and head of the rehabilitative medicine department here, an

over-simplified view of the trans-sexual is a person with "a male body but a female mind."

Dr. Laub, who is investigating the possibility of performing sex-changing operations at Stanford, says he believes some patients fit into the category of trans-sexualism.

"Almost all of these patients are dressed as women and carry out, to the fullest extent, a life of the opposite sex."

Roughly 90 per cent of trans-sexuals are men, who often want to be women so badly they even adopt feminine names.

Stanford has made "modifications," but has performed no complete operations.

"We have not decided yet if we are going to embark on this

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Change Of Sex Surgery

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program," said Dr. Laub. "That will depend on further study."

Physicians here are extremely shy about publicity, and will allow themselves only a few comments beyond admitting that Stanford has done the adjustment surgery.

The reason is that publicity often results in hundreds of "patients" pounding the hospital doors, besieging surgeons to change their sex.

"We have to be fair to the patients we have, because of the nature of the operation," says Laub.

"Whenever there is publicity, we get a thousand patients knocking at the door.

"And the patients we get are the wrong type. They are so desperate they'll do anything to have the operation."

Dr. Laub called the problem "a fantastic danger" as well as an administrative and diagnostic headache.

Responses like this dramatize the fact that while there are many homosexual persons who would like to swap sexes, only a few persons can actually make good a case for trans-sexual surgery.

Estimates are that the U.S. trans-sexual population is limited to roughly 3,000.

Among the more prominent hospitals throughout the country performing the sex switch are John Hopkins, Minnesota and UCLA.

Still a controversial field, some psychiatrists have leveled broadside attacks at the increasing number of surgical sex changes performed in this country.

Recently, Dr. Charles W. Socarides of Manhattan, by his own account the only psychiatrist to analyze a trans-sexual, said the operation is "pathetic and unscientific."

He said that after the operation "the patient remains in his chromosomal structure and the psychic problems are the same or worse."

However, a medical case can be made for the operation in some instances.

Says Dr. Laub: "Although it seems quite absurd that a disease such as this should actually exist, I believe that there are patients who fit into this category."

The operation itself is called "sexual conversion" in medical circles. It alters male genitalia to make the patient's sex organ more similar to that of a female and more compatible to her psychological needs.

Dr. Laub said extensive psychiatric interview and support are provided through the entire episode of sexual conversion.

"We're investigating this disease to determine if surgery is worthwhile," he explained.

About 30 operations have been performed by a urological surgeon, Dr. Elmer Belt, in Los Angeles, and four have been performed at Johns Hopkins.

Dr. Harry Benjamin of San Francisco has written a book on the sexual phenomenon. Some former patients have married successfully as women, and a few of them have achieved motherhood through adoption.