

Shock or no shock: What's the answer?



Barbara Schiff

Dear Barbara,
During the past two years, I have been suffering from depression. I have been given anti-depressive medication with less than desired results. My physician recommends a course of electric shock therapy.

He says that it is particularly advisable with patients like myself because of difficulty in taking medications that might otherwise be prescribed.

I don't know what to do because I recently was told of a woman in my age group who was given electric shock therapy after unsuccessful anti-depressant medications. I cannot vouch for the correctness of the story but I was told that she now suffers from marked memory loss and lives like a vegetable. This picture terrifies me.

My family wants me to try the shock therapy. They are very convincing and sometimes I want to agree with them. What advice can you give me about this?

Sick and Scared

Dear reader,
On the subject of electric shock therapy (ECT), there are large discrepancies

between the official position and the documented opinion of many individual practitioners.

The American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association and the National Institute of Mental Health report that ECT is effective in treating severe mental illness, such as suicidal depression. They say that it is particularly advisable with older patients because of their difficulty taking medications that might otherwise be prescribed.

The fact sheet published on this subject goes on to say that ECT is used only rarely (two-tenths of 1 percent) but produces improvement in at least 80 percent of its recipients. It states further that researchers have

found no evidence that ECT damages the brain although broken bones were previously a harmful side effect that has changed since the effective use of general anesthesia and muscle relaxants.

Many psychiatrists and others in the medical profession disagree and document serious and often overlooked or misreported side effects from this treatment. Peter R. Breggin in "Toxic Psychiatry" indicates that ECT produces brain damage and amnesia. He accuses the aforementioned agencies of both faulty data collection and insufficiently informing patients of the risks.

I hope I have answered your questions sufficiently. This is a highly controversial topic and I understand your

disputing the use of this treatment in your situation.

I hope you are receiving psychotherapy for your depression although it is caused by seemingly unalterable physical problems. A combination of anti-depressant medication and psychotherapy usually give good results. Medication allows the psychotherapy a chance to work.

Barbara

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. You can also leave a message by dialing 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1877.

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renovation of the old Hughes & Hatcher store on Woodward Avenue, just north of the Fox Theatre. The site will house the 350-seat theater, restaurant, bar and banquet facility.

"We have a unique relationship, as all Second City dealings tend to be," Leonard said of the arrangement. "The Hitches are wonderful people and they are building the space for us. We are

handling all the artistic end."

Leonard said the goal of the Detroit stage will be to become a vibrant part of the community, with an ability to address issues affecting the area. Achieving that means that Second City will develop a made in the Motor City cast.

"We're going to end up having some open auditions," Leonard said. "Our

goal is to eventually have a completely homegrown cast. That's the way Second City works.

"Detroit is at a really critical point right now. We are hoping to be a part of making things better and bringing our unique perspective."

The Second City touring company appears in Ann Arbor at the Michigan Theater Nov. 21.

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