



BRAIN DAMAGING EFFECTS OF ELECTROSHOCK: THE FACTS

Electroshock (ECT) is the application of up to hundreds of volts of electricity sent searing through the brain to induce a grand mal seizure. ECT can cause brain damage, permanent memory loss and even death. Also called electroconvulsive therapy, it is not therapy it is torture.

So unwanted is electroshock that one Australian woman forced to undergo electroshock said she has had security guards wheel her down to the treatment room holding her down so she didn't escape. "I felt like I was being wheeled down to the gas chamber really," she said. She would even eat from stashed food to avoid the general anaesthetic and when staff found her food, she resorted to eating grass to avoid the electroshock.

The United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) together issued a Guidance on mental health and human rights legislation in October 2023. It states, "coercive practices in mental health care violate the right to be protected from torture or cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment." Coercive practices include restraint and involuntary electroshock. The Guidance calls on all governments to prohibit all coercive measures.

 The Guidance says that electroshock is an "irreversible intervention" which can cause "memory loss and brain damage."

Psychiatrists deceptively cloak electroshock with medical legitimacy—the hospital setting, white-coated assistants, anaesthetics, muscle paralyzing drugs and sophisticated-looking equipment. The effects of shock treatment can be horrific, but the full ramifications are not explained to the patients or their families. Electroshock never addresses the cause of the person's problems and offers no cure.

HISTORY OF ELECTROSHOCK

Electroshock was developed in 1938 out of a Rome slaughterhouse, where pigs were electroshocked to make it easier to slit their throats in order to kill them. A psychiatrist, Ugo Cerletti, had been experimenting with electric shock on dogs where half of the animals died from cardiac arrest. After seeing the pigs being shocked, he decided to use this on people.

In Australia in the early 1940s, one of Australia's first ECT machines was constructed by Birch, the Superintendent of Mental Institutions for South Australia. He first tested the ECT machine on rabbits and then used it on patients in 1941 at Parkside Mental Hospital in Adelaide.

SIDE EFFECTS FROM ECT INCLUDE

Cardiovascular complications including irregular heartbeat and heart attack; stroke; cognition and memory impairment (sometimes permanent); dental or oral trauma; physical trauma; manic symptoms; prolonged seizures; worsening of psychiatric symptoms; cardiac arrest and death. Manufacturers of an ECT machine used in Australia state other serious adverse events have occurred including coma and homicidality.

 Any claim that ECT does not cause brain damage ignores basic electrical science as when electricity is sent through the brain, it is converted into heat, increasing the temperature. Cells can suffer dysfunction, temporary injury, permanent damage or even cell death, according to Dr. Ken Castleman, Ph.D., a biomedical engineer who has provided legal testimony in ECT device litigation.

 A 2017 published review of more than 90 ECT studies since 2009 showed they remain "methodologically flawed" and "Given the well-documented high risk of persistent memory dysfunction, the cost-benefit analysis for ECT remains so poor that its use cannot be scientifically, or ethically, justified." The review also found that there is still no evidence that ECT is more effective than placebo for depression or suicide prevention.



THE ELECTROSHOCK MACHINE

When the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved the current ECT devices for use in Australia in 2004 and 2015, no medical studies proving safety and efficacy were required, provided or relied upon to make this decision. Yet, on October 19, 2018, following a lawsuit it settled, Somatics LLC, the manufacturer of the Thymatron ECT device, which is used in Australia, issued a warning of "permanent brain damage" in its new risk disclosures.

NUMBER OF ELECTROSHOCK TREATMENTS GIVEN IN AUSTRALIA

Today, psychiatry shocks and tortures the brains of approximately 1.4 million people every year worldwide, including children, pregnant women and the elderly.

During 2023 in Australia, 29,165 Medicare funded “treatments” of ECT were given at a cost of \$5,090,337 including anaesthetic. In 2023 the numbers of Medicare funded ECT “treatments” were: **VIC:** 9,018, **QLD:** 7,166, **NSW:** 7,030, **WA:** 3,539, **SA:** 1,788, **ACT:** 301, **TAS:** 275, **NT:** 48. These figures do not include state and territory government funded ECT. For example, in 2022/23 Medicare funded 3,539 “treatments” in WA. Yet the total “treatments” given in WA for that financial year was 7,545.

The elderly can be a target for ECT as are women. In Australia, in 2023 there were 6,300 Medicare funded electroshocks were given to the elderly over the age of 65, including 334 given to people aged 85 or over. And a staggering 70% of the total Medicare funded ECT “treatments” were given to women.

Involuntary electroshock: Is legal in all states and territories (except for under 14-year-olds in WA and under 12-year-olds in the ACT). In 2023, the NSW Mental Health Review Tribunal approved 765 applications for involuntary electroshock, 3 of these were for girls under 16. In 2023 the UN and WHO stated, “ECT is not recommended for children, and this should be prohibited through legislation.”



As long ago as 2013, the UN called on all countries to impose a total ban on all forced interventions including involuntary electroshock.



And in 2019, the UN directly told Australia it should, “Prohibit the use of non-consensual electroconvulsive therapy on the basis of any form of impairment.” This has not been done in any state or territory.



In 2021, the World Health Organisation said it was important for countries to eliminate practices that restrict the right to give consent which includes involuntary electroshock.

DOES PSYCHIATRY KNOW HOW ELECTROSHOCK WORKS?

Psychiatry admits it still doesn’t know how ECT “works,” a fact easily discovered when researched for. Victoria’s former Deputy Chief Psychiatrist Professor Kuruvilla George, wrote in an ECT article, “How does ECT work? This is the million dollar question and the first thing to state is that no one is certain.” Psychiatrist’s attempts at explaining how ECT works include such statements as, “It is believed...,” “it has been suggested...,” and “One theory suggests...” Imagine a heart surgeon claiming he doesn’t know how the heart works but has dozens of theories—and no scientific fact—about why a coronary bypass operation should be performed. He would be sued for malpractice!

TAKE ACTION NOW TO HELP BAN ELECTROSHOCK

Write, phone, visit or email the Premier, Leader of the Opposition, Minister and Opposition Minister for Health and your local Member of Parliament in your state or territory:

Express your concerns about electroshock and ask them to amend your Mental Health Act to ban electroshock for all ages with criminal fines and prison terms in violation of the ban.

ACT: <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/find-your-members>

NSW: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/all-members.aspx>

NT: <https://parliament.nt.gov.au/members/by-name>

QLD: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Members/Current-Members/Member-List>

SA: <https://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/en/Members/Member-Details>

TAS: https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/70794/Legislative-Council-Members-List.pdf
and <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/house-of-assembly/currentmembers>

VIC: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members/member-search/?member-status=current>

WA: <https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/memblast.nsf/WAMembers>

Log onto cchr.org.au to see references for the above and to learn more about electroshock

CCHR Contact Information

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CCHR was established by the Church of Scientology and Professor of Psychiatry the late Dr Thomas Szasz in 1969 to investigate and expose psychiatric violations of human rights. CCHR is an international organisation.