

# CCHR Condemns FDA Stay on Ban of Skin-Shocking Students for Behavioral Control

*A banned device continues to be used to electroshock body parts of students for painful behavior modification & punishment and has human rights group riled.*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is allowing a behavioral treatment device which the United Nations says “inflicts pain and suffering tantamount to torture in violation of international law,” to continue being used despite banning it in March this year.[1] Disability rights groups and the mental health industry watchdog, [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\)](#), fought for years to get the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) skin shock device banned. But less than a month after the FDA’s Final Rule outlawing the torturous device, the agency agreed to allow the Massachusetts-based Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) to continue to use it for skin-shocking autistic and behaviorally challenged individuals, pending an appeal of the Order.[2]



A banned device continues to be used to electroshock body parts of students for painful behavior modification & punishment and has human rights group riled. They want patient protections made a priority over the “torturous” device.

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The cruelty perpetrated against children and adults at JRC is psychological and physical abuse, couched in the name of ‘treatment.’”

*Laurie Ahern, President of Disability Rights International*

CCHR said it is astounding that the onus is not put on safeguarding individuals first while “ironing out legal.” The GED uses a combination of high amperage and electrode spacing to deliver a punishment more painful than a commercial stun gun. Survivors report a life of terror punctuated by extreme pain, reported ADAPT, that has independently championed for their protection.[3] Electrodes are attached to the arms, legs, or stomachs of students to emit 60 volts and 15 milliamps of electricity in

two-second bursts. The potential damage is horrific: pain, skin burns, trauma, tissue damage,

suicidality, chronic and acute stress, nightmares and flashbacks of panic and rage, according to the FDA.[4]

Jeffrey Shuren, Director, Center for Devices and Radiological Health, FDA, also stayed the ban because of the current “public health emergency.” Under the GED Final Order, a physician-directed plan for transitioning from skin shocking to a safer alternative was required for individuals currently being shocked at JRC. Shuren stayed this because, in part, “it may divert healthcare delivery resources from other uses during the pandemic.”[5]

Jan Eastgate, President of CCHR International, said this is illogical given that the GED already involves worker contact with the patient: “The simplicity is this is a decision between torturing or not torturing disturbed individuals usually against their will, with others consenting to it.”

Even in its Final Rule banning the GED, FDA reported, “The shock need only be subjectively stressful enough to cause trauma or suffering. Trauma becomes more likely, for example, when the recipient does not have control over the shock or has developed a fear of future shocks....” Further, “The vulnerable population subject to ESDs [electrical stimulation devices]...are entitled to the public health protections under the FD&C Act [Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act]”[6]

Nancy Weiss, Director, National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware, has led a national effort against the GED after visiting JRC in 1993.[7] Earlier this year, she reiterated the “incredibly painful, fall-on-the-floor, screaming-in-agony level electric shock for students. Why our government doesn’t protect these people, I don’t know.”[8]

Eastgate agrees and says legislators should be outraged that the ban on this “torturous shock procedure” is now stayed.

The Guardian reported, “It is the ‘imagery of healing’ that has often been used for some of the other worst examples of medical practice....Techniques included forced hospitalization, electroshock therapy, castration, torture drugs and lobotomies.”[9]

The International Justice Resource Center says: “The right to freedom from torture is enshrined in many human rights instruments and protects all individuals from being intentionally subjected to severe physical or psychological distress by, or with the approval or acquiescence of, government agents....”[10]

JRC students have described such psychological stress in frightening terms: “I would ask God to make my heart stop because I did not want to live when that (electric shock) was happening to me,” “It was like being underground in hell” and “I just want to die and make it (electric shock) stop.”[11]

In 2013, Juan Mendez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, now Professor of Human Rights Law in Residence at the American University–Washington College of Law, said, “I feel very strongly that

electricity applied to a person's body creates a very extreme form of pain.”[12] His successor, Special Rapporteur Manfred Nowak, stated: “I have no doubts about it. It is inflicted in a situation where a victim is powerless. And, I mean, a child in the restraint chair, being then subjected to electric shocks, how more powerless can you be?”[13]

Eastgate is concerned that JRC students could be skin-shocked for years. A 2016 challenge to the FDA's Proposed Rule on the electroshock treatment device took more than two years for the FDA to respond. “During that time, many thousands of Americans were subjected to electroshock, which uses more than seven times the voltage of a GED device and can cause severe memory loss, brain damage, skin burns, heart irregularities and potentially death,” Eastgate says. “FDA has allowed the use of the ECT device on children aged five and younger, state government reports show.” An [online petition calls for a ban on the ECT device](#).

“FDA's acquiescence to shocking JRC students excused as treatment should be investigated,” Eastgate says. “In the public interest and the interest of justice, both the GED and ECT devices should be banned now.”

CCHR is a mental health watchdog responsible for more than 180 laws that protect patients from damaging psychiatric practices. DONATE to support its work here:

<https://www.cchr.org/cchr-donate/>

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Amber Rauscher  
Citizens Commission on Human Rights  
+1 323-467-4242

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