

CCHR Supports Call for Ban on Electroshock Treatment by UK Legislators

Mental health watchdog says recent UK recognition that electroshock should be banned is needed in the U.S., where 100,000 Americans are electroshocked each year

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, April 12, 2023

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Citizens Commission on Human Rights International, a 54-year mental health industry watchdog based in Los Angeles, has welcomed the United Kingdom government leaders' call to ban [electroshock treatment](#). In March 2023, a cross-section of UK Members of Parliament (MPs) from multiple political parties requested that ECT—commonly known as electroconvulsive therapy or electroshock treatment—be prohibited.[1] CCHR says this same move is necessary for the U.S.



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In the UK, an estimated 5,000 individuals receive electroshock each year in a population that is one-fifth of that in the U.S. where 100,000 Americans—including children ages 5 or younger—are electroshocked annually. CCHR has documented thousands of cases of individuals who report that ECT—the passage of up to 460 volts of electricity through the brain causing a grand-mal seizure—has resulted in brain damage and memory loss. The group has helped obtain four U.S. state laws—California, Colorado, Tennessee, and Texas—that prohibit ECT use on minors but wants this extended to all ages. In Western Australia, CCHR obtained added protections in the form of criminal penalties for anyone administering ECT to someone younger than 14.[2]

The UK MPs voiced serious concerns that women are disproportionately given ECT. Two-thirds of patients receiving it in the UK are women, similar to that in the U.S. In a study published in 2020 in the *Journal of ECT*, 62.3% of 62,602 patients receiving ECT in three U.S. states alone (California, Illinois, and Vermont) were women.

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John Read, Ph.D.

A startling 40% of ECT procedures conducted in the UK are carried out without consent under the Mental Health Act. In the U.S., many states allow for involuntary ECT, despite the United Nations Convention against Torture condemning the practice, which both U.S. and UK have signed onto.[3] A July 2018 UN Human Rights Council report indicated that forced psychiatric treatment, including ECT, constitutes “torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...”[4] In 2021, the World Health Organization also issued mental health

guidelines further recognizing the need for a ban on forced treatment, as therapeutically damaging.[5]

A Los Angeles law firm that has successfully litigated ECT civil cases, reports: “ECT can cause brain damage, permanent memory loss and neurocognitive injury,” “there are no long-term studies that show ECT is safe or effective” and “the procedure continues to deliver a significant amount of electricity to the human brain, resulting in damage.”[6]

Foremost ECT researcher, psychologist Harold Sackeim, Professor of Psychiatry and Radiology at Columbia University, and his colleagues agreed in a study that ECT may cause permanent amnesia and permanent deficits in cognitive abilities, which affect the ability to function.[7]

While the Food and Drug Administration has allowed ECT devices on the market it warns too that “Long-term safety and effectiveness of ECT treatment has not been demonstrated.”[8]

Furthermore, in 2022, psychologist John Read, Ph.D., Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of East London's School of Psychology, and psychiatrist Joanna Moncrief, Professor of Critical and Social Psychiatry at University College London, published the findings of meta-analyses of ECT studies from which they were unable to identify any evidence that ECT prevents suicide, as some psychiatrists assert. Numerous studies have found ECT recipients are more likely than other patients to kill themselves.[9] According to Read, “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.”[10]

Clinical psychologist Craig Newnes, the author of *A Critical A-Z of Electroshock*, says, “The biggest mystery of all is why on Earth people think that putting bolts of electricity through people’s heads is a good idea.” Further, “People often ask, ‘What is electroshock?’ And what it is, is electrocution. That’s all it is.”

Australian psychiatrist Niall McLaren writing in *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry* about electroshock said suggestions that ECT is “useful, valuable and clinically indicated” are personal

judgments only, devoid of any empirical content.”[11] McLaren advises patients that any psychiatrist who tells them “‘You need ECT’ is really only saying, ‘I don’t know what else to do,’” and is adamant that “No psychiatrist needs to use ECT.”[12]

CCHR strongly believes that the evidence is clear: electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) should be banned. The group provides a documentary, [Therapy or Torture: The Truth About Electroshock](#) to properly inform consumers, their families, and legislators. It also encourages people to sign its [petition to ban ECT](#).

[1] Maya Oppenheim, “MPs call for ban on electric shocks as mental health treatment: Exclusive: ‘By the end of it, I couldn’t recognise relatives or friends. I couldn’t count money out. I couldn’t do my two times table,’ says one patient,” Independent, 12 Mar. 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/electric-shock-therapy-ban-women-b2293741.html>

[2] “Electroshock therapy on under-14s banned in WA after law passes Parliament,” ABC News, 17 Oct. 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-17/mental-health-bill-passes-wa-parliament/5822874>

[3] “Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan E. Méndez,” UN Human Rights Council, 1 Feb. 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A.HRC.22.53.English.pdf>; <https://www.cchrnt.org/memorandum-need-for-human-rights-in-mental-health-laws/>

[4] “Mental health and human rights: Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development,” Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, Human Rights Council, 10-28 Sept. 2018, p. 14, point 46, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/232/93/PDF/G1823293.pdf?OpenElement>

[5] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2021/06/11/world-health-organization-new-guidelines-are-vital-to-end-coercive-psychiatric-practices-abuse/>, citing: “Guidance on Community Mental Health Services: Promoting Person-Centered and Rights-Based Approaches,” World Health Organization, 10 June 2021, p. 4, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025707>

[6] <https://www.wisnerbaum.com/defective-medical-device-injuries/ect/>

[7] John Breeding, Ph.D., “Electroshocking Children: Why It Should Be Stopped,” 11 Feb. 2014

[8] <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/12/26/2018-27809/neurological-devices-reclassification-of-electroconvulsive-therapy-devices-effective-date-of>, under Response 23,

"Response" 4; § 882.5940 Electroconvulsive therapy device, (J)

[9] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2022/02/07/new-study-tells-consumers-the-truth-of-potential-lethal-electroshock-and-antidepressant-risks/>, John Read, Ph.D., Joanna Moncrief, M.D., "Depression: why drugs and electricity are not the answer," Psychological Medicine, Cambridge University Press, 1 Feb. 2022, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/depression-why-drugs-and-electricity-are-not-the-answer/3197739131D795E326AE6913720E6E37>

[10] John Read and Chelsea Arnold, "Is Electroconvulsive Therapy for Depression More Effective Than Placebo? A Systematic Review of Studies Since 2009," Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2017, <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/springer/ehpp/2017/00000019/00000001/art0000>; John Read, "Patients Are Being Misinformed About Electroconvulsive Therapy," Psychology Today. 15 June 2021, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychiatry-through-the-looking-glass/202106/patients-are-being-misinformed-about>

[11] Dr. Niall McLaren, "Electroconvulsive Therapy: A Critical Perspective," Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol.19, No. 2, 201

[12] Niall McLaren, "No Psychiatrist Needs to Use ECT," 27 June 2017, <https://www.cchrnt.org/2019/07/02/psychiatrists-got-it-wrong-on-electroshock-wsj/>

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