

# 40 Years After Lethal Treatment Ban: Urgent Call for Global End to Electroshock

*CCHR commemorates 40 years since banning lethal deep sleep treatment which utilized electroshock, emphasizing imperative need for global ban on electroshock*

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[EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- This year marks the 40th anniversary of Australia's ban on a lethal psychiatric practice called "Deep Sleep Treatment," which involved patients put into a psychopharmaceutical-induced "sleep" for several weeks and given electroshock. The practice resulted in 24 patient deaths and also led to 24 suicides. Spearheaded by the Citizens

Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), the campaign to ban Deep Sleep Treatment made its administration a criminal offense under the New South Wales Mental Health Act. Such patient protections are crucial, and they underscore the need to address similar dangerous and coercive practices occurring in the mental health industry today. The United Nations Committee against

Torture deemed the coercive use of electroshock as torture, yet it continues to be administered involuntarily in the U.S. and abroad.

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*Jan Eastgate, President CCHR International*

The late Dr. Harry Bailey, the chief psychiatrist at Chelmsford hospital, developed Deep Sleep Treatment in Australia after studying the practice in the U.S. during a World Health Organization-funded tour in the 1950s. “I visited all centers in the USA where deep sedation

techniques were in use,” Bailey wrote. He traveled to California, Chicago, Hawaii, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Washington.



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Beginning in 1978, CCHR exposed Deep Sleep Treatment through the media and in complaints filed with health and law enforcement authorities and obtained several coroner inquests into patient deaths—all of which led to the ban on Deep Sleep Treatment in 1983.

60 Minutes in Australia and Channel 4 TV in the UK did exposés of Deep Sleep Treatment in 1980 and 1992 respectively. 60 Minutes won an Australian Logie television award for its story, similar to an Emmy in the U.S. Channel 4's documentary obtained a damning admission from a former medical superintendent of Chelmsford regarding the 24 suicides linked to Deep Sleep Treatment and ECT, reporting that the doctor claimed the deaths from suicide were “outstanding psychiatric results.”[1]

Today, psychiatrists defend the use of ECT as a deterrent to suicide, knowing this is as much an outrageous claim as suicide following Deep Sleep Treatment was an “outstanding result.” A February 2023 study published in Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica found that after receiving electroshock, patients were [44 times more likely to die by suicide](#) than people in the general population.[2]

The late Dr. Ian Gardiner, a Chelmsford hospital psychiatrist, admitted to Channel 4 that patients, while in the drug-induced coma, never received an anesthetic before being given ECT and, as such, some were awake during its administration.[3]

A former Australian actor, Barry Hart was one such patient. He described the horrifying experience to 60 Minutes: “And all my head inside was exploding with white light as if it was blowing off its shoulders.”[4] Gwen Whitty, a 28-year-old mother, described: “My entire body could not stop its movements and body spasms. I just never-endingly threw myself all over the bed until I finally fell very heavily to the floor. I can still remember the intense pain to my shoulders, arms, and top part of my body. My husband heard gurgling sounds coming from behind a screen. Upon investigation he found, to his horror, me after having had electroshock treatment, blood trickling from my nose and mouth.”[5]

In 1990, Judge John Slattery, who headed the government inquiry into Deep Sleep Treatment, determined that ECT without a patient's consent, or after obtaining consent by use of fraud and deceit, commits “a trespass to the person” and is “responsible for an assault on them.”[6] And so it remains today, with involuntary commitment laws throughout the U.S., Australia, UK, and elsewhere allowing ECT to be given against a person's wishes.

Twenty-three years after Judge Slattery's comments, the UN Committee against Torture warned in 2013 that electroshock administered forcibly constitutes torture, a practice that should be outlawed.[7] That was reinforced by the W.H.O. guideline on mental health in 2021 which agreed coercive psychiatric practices should be prohibited.[8]

Today, [patients are still misled about how ECT](#) causes brain damage, memory loss, and death, constituting consumer fraud and assault.[9] It took a 2018 civil lawsuit for one ECT device

manufacturer to warn that electroshock can cause brain damage.

Electroshock brutality was recently discussed by Spanish filmmaker and investigative reporter, Gabriel Carrion Lopez, in The European Times. He pointed out the parallels between shock therapy in psychiatric facilities and its use as a means of torture carried out by central intelligence or terrorist movements around the world, as well as the electric chair once used in the U.S. for executions. He wrote: "The use of electricity as a form of death or torture to obtain information is basically already classified as a human rights offense...."[10]

Jan Eastgate, president of CCHR International says: "The fact that any electroshock is still used in the psychiatric industry is a human rights offense. Laws must be enacted globally that not only ban its use as a mental health 'treatment' but also make it a criminal offense to subject any patient to its barbarity."

[Read full article here.](#)

[1] <https://youtu.be/dlRYlrUyGs0>, timecode 48:54; <https://www.s4me.info/threads/deep-sleep-therapy-abc-channel-4-1990s-documentary-on-a-psychiatric-treatment-that-directly-and-indirectly-was-associated-with-a-number-of-deaths.16382/>

[2] <https://www.cchrint.org/2023/02/28/electroshock-patients-44-times-more-likely-to-commit-suicide/>, Peter Simons, "ECT Does Not Seem to Prevent Suicide," Mad In America, 17 Feb. 2023, <https://www.madinamerica.com/2023/02/ect-does-not-seem-to-prevent-suicide/>

[3] <https://youtu.be/dlRYlrUyGs0>, timecode 48.25

[4] John Little, "Inside 60 Minutes: The Story Behind The Stories," Allen & Unwin 1994, <https://suburbia.net/~fun/scn/books/inside-60-minutes.html>

[5] John O'Neill and Robert Haupt, "Psychiatry Gone Mad: 'We Want Justice,'" The Sydney Morning Herald, 30 July 1988

[6] The Hon. Mr. Acting Justice, J.P. Slattery, A.O., "Report of the Royal Commission Into Deep Sleep Therapy," New South Wales Royal Commission, Vol. 6, Dec. 1990, p. 96

[7] A/HRC/22/53, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan E. Méndez," United Nations, General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Twenty-second Session, Agenda Item 3, 1 Feb. 2013, p. 21, para 85, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A.HRC.22.53.English.pdf>

[8] "Guidance on Community Mental Health Services: Promoting Person-Centered and Rights-Based Approaches," World Health Organization, 10 June 2021, pp 4 & 6,

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025707>

[9] <https://www.cchrint.org/2023/06/23/consumers-unaware-that-brain-damaging-electroshock-devices-are-not-fda-approved/>

[10] Gabriel Carrion Lopez, "The electric chair, psychiatric electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and the death penalty," European Times, 18 June 2023, <https://www.europeantimes.news/2023/06/the-electric-chair-psychiatric-electroconvulsive-therapy-ect-and-the-death-penalty/>

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