

New Report from WHO and UN Warns of Electroconvulsive Therapy Risks

Attorney in Landmark Case Against ECT Device Manufacturer Welcomes Warning of Brain Damage

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The World

Health Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

Rights issued [joint guidance this week](#) of the risks that electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) poses to patients, including memory loss and brain damage. Wisner Baum senior partner Bijan Esfandiari was the lead attorney in Jeffrey Thelen v. Somatics, LLC (case number 8:20-cv-01724), a federal lawsuit that to our knowledge was the first case involving severe personal injury allegations against an ECT device manufacturer to proceed to trial. Esfandiari released the following statement:



“The latest guidance from the World Health Organization and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recognizes what we have argued in our ECT litigation for years—ECT ‘treatment’ is highly controversial and can have devastating consequences, including permanent memory loss and brain damage. The guidance also shows that psychiatrists who administer ECT are increasingly alone in their acceptance of and advocacy for ECT.

“We hope this guidance serves to raise awareness about ECT’s risks and ‘inspires’ ECT manufacturers, as well as hospitals and psychiatrists who administer ECT, to be fully forthcoming to those vulnerable patients who come to them seeking help, only to be betrayed and stripped of what we hold most precious, our memories and mental acuity. We also encourage legislators and the FDA to take heed in the guidance’s admonitions and take action. We’ve seen firsthand the harm ECT can cause and we hope this guidance signals that the days of being laissez-faire about ECT’s risks and unproven efficacy is coming to an end, once and for all.”

The joint guidance from the WHO and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights noted the “significant controversy” surrounding ECT. “If permitted, ECT must only be administered with the written or documented, free and informed consent of the person concerned,” the publication stated. It also said that people who are offered ECT should be “made aware of all its risks and

potential short- and long-term harmful effects, such as memory loss and brain damage.” The publication was titled, “Mental health, human rights and legislation: guidance and practice,” and was intended to inform lawmakers on important issues in mental health treatment. Among its recommendations were that lawmakers prohibit the use of ECT on children.

The joint guidance came four months after a federal jury in Tampa, Florida, found Florida-based manufacturer Somatics placed its ECT device on the market without adequate instructions or warnings to the physicians who prescribed ECT to the plaintiff, Jeffrey Thelen. [Testimony and evidence](#) from the seven-day trial offers disturbing revelations about the ECT industry. Dr. Richard Abrams, co-owner of Somatics, admitted during questioning that practitioners of ECT do not understand how it works and that the clinical rule of thumb to administer ECT for at least 30 seconds was not based on any scientific literature. Instead, practitioners had “plucked it out of the air” when they adopted the 30-second standard, Abrams testified.

Los Angeles-based Wisner Baum is representing other plaintiffs in lawsuits alleging harm from the decades-old psychiatric treatment ECT. The firm has developed a [web page](#) that details the medical studies showing an inextricable link between ECT and brain damage and describing how the devices were “grandfathered in” before a law that would have required approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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