

J. Letters

February 18, 1978

William R. Barclay, M.D.
Editor, JAMA
535 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610

Dear Dr. Barclay,

I have just read the February 6 and 13 issues of the Journal, and I am writing to suggest that the senior editor, Dr. Z. Danilevicius, has done the readers a disservice in his selection of abstracts from the American Journal of Psychiatry (pg. 657, February 13, 1978).

In 1976, the American Psychiatric Association held a symposium on electroconvulsive therapy and invited an outspoken and brash critic, Dr. J. Friedberg to present a report. His report was shown to be dated and biased (see critique by Fred Frankel, Amer. J. Psychiat. 134:1014-1019, 1977). Indeed, the Editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry, Dr. F. Braceland initially rejected the article as unfit for publication, but agreed to publish the article in the context of the symposium. Yet, he added a disclaimer that the articles had not received the usual criticism.

It is unfortunate that the readers of the JAMA will read only the abstract of this biased and prejudiced report, without recognition of the critique of Dr. Frankel or the comments from the other reports. It was of some interest the same evening to read Dr. D.X. Freedman's review of the interesting issues of the immediate past and to see that he considered ECT to have some merit and that he cited the report by Dr. Frankel. (see JAMA, 2/6/78, pg 510).

It seems that you may wish to challenge your senior editor on his bias and selection criteria. The readership deserves a better citation of the literature.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry