

March 25, 1983

David Behar, M.D.  
V.A. Medical Center  
University & Woodland Avenues  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19104

Dear Dr. Behar,

As a start on your questions of 3/21/83, you may search the APA Task Force Report #14 (1978) or my book (Convulsive Therapy: Theory and Practice, Raven Press, N.Y., 1979). Both present the incidence of mortality in ECT. It is very low, and as a consequence, it is very difficult to define 'risk factors'.

For morbidity, the question must be refined, since there are many consequences of the ECT process, from hematoma at the injection site or post-seizure excitement to complaints of amnesia. Again, the two books will help you refine your question.

I know of no studies of ECT in right (? vs left) cerebral lesions since ECT is not ordinarily used in individuals with brain lesions. There is an extensive literature of the safety and efficacy of ECT among diabetics, patients with thyroid dysfunction, and hypertensives; and some case reports of patients successfully treated in the absence of adrenals, with Cushing's syndrome, etc. Again, some focus can be gleaned from these two volumes. For more recent material, you may wish to write to Dr. Arthur Gabriel at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. He is an electrotherapist with an extensive experience with medically ill patients.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry