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Mr. Harry Florentine
Cambridge University Press
New York City 10022

Dear Mr. Florentine,

My reasons for cancelling the subscription to Psychological Medicine are many, some general and some quite specific. The general reasons are the usual-- I find few articles of interest to me, and these are generally those of a review type. Such articles are often reproduced elsewhere so that the failure to read the article in this journal is rarely a handicap.

As for specifics, I have found the attitude of the editors to one issue in medicine, that of convulsive therapy, quite inconsistent with the prevailing experience. The editors seem to find the treatment repugnant and seem to have made efforts to discredit it. In the past year, an article on ECT was published by Dr. Crow. I found it poorly done, and wrote a critique addressed to the editors as a letter. It was rejected with the statement that letters are not accepted by the journal. If true, then how can the readers redress the balance of bias that may creep into any editorial board or correct errors that may occur in any article, no matter how well reviewed?

I recently wrote a book on convulsive therapy, which has been reviewed rather favorably by a number of journals, including Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine, and the American Journal of Psychiatry. Yet, your reviewers chose to combine a review of this volume, the result of more than 25 years of research, with a review of an earlier published diatribe written by a psychotic medical resident. In combining the two reviews, the editors did my serious volume a distinct disservice, but more importantly, they exposed what is clearly their bias.

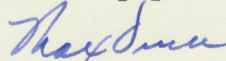
Last year, Professor Ottosson of the University of Goteborg and I submitted a review article on a theory of the mode of action of ECT to the journal. It was rejected as too speculative. While we accepted this response as reasoned, the Crow article appeared subsequently. Its quality is so inferior to our effort, that I believe bias also entered into this decision. (The article has since been published in a fine journal, needless to say.)

This experience follows an earlier experience with the editor. In 1977, I co-edited a volume on the effects of chronic hashish use. The study was undertaken by a team of scientists working in two countries over six years. The data were presented carefully. The editors could not agree as to the significance of one of the findings and it was my burden to write a concluding chapter. To indicate the difference in opinion, I entered a footnote that the opinions stated were mine alone. It was this fact that piqued the excitement of Dr. Shepherd, and which was the highlight of the review. At an international meeting I met Dr. Shepherd before the review appeared and he was gleeful that the reviewer would highlight this point. His glee was matched by my later discomfiture at having a serious effort distorted by the reviewer and the Editor.

These are some of the reasons why Psychological Medicine no longer interests me.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Sincerely yours,



Max Fink, M.D.

Professor of Psychiatry

cc:Prof. M. Shepherd