

May 8, 1993

Committee on Ethics
American Psychological Association
1200 Seventeenth Street, N.W.; Room 406
Washington, D.C. 20036

Gentlemen:

I am writing in response to the complaint of improper ethics charged by Ms. Linda Andre against Professor Harold Sackeim of Columbia University.

I am acquainted with the professional activities of Dr. Sackeim for more than a decade. I participated in the symposium on ECT which he organized at the New York Academy of Sciences in 1985; we worked together on the American Psychiatric Association Task Force on Electroconvulsive Therapy, 1988-1990; and he has been an invaluable member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Convulsive Therapy* since its inauguration in 1985.

With regard to the cited location and date of the complaint, the ECT review course under the auspices of CME, Inc. I chaired that course and was responsible for inviting Dr. Sackeim and for planning the course.

I am personally acquainted with Ms. Linda Andre. I first became aware of her activities when I was asked to be an expert witness for defendants in a malpractice suit in which she alleges that she received ECT without proper consent, that the diagnosis was erroneous, and that she has been left with permanent memory lacunae for events over her whole lifespan. In reviewing this case, I have read the hospital record, including summaries of her prior psychiatric hospitalizations; her record of suicidality and psychosis; her deposition and that of her treating therapists; as well as supporting documentation.

On the occasion of the course in which Dr. Sackeim is alleged to have lied, Ms. Andre took the microphone during the question period, harangued me for my failure to acquiesce to her statements that memory loss was permanent. During this time, she stood with a large covered object, and when I failed to answer her queries, she marched up to the platform and placed a large black skillet with an animal's brain in it; the brain was lying on a bed of dollar bills.

When I gave a public lecture before the SUNY History of Medicine group on the history of the anti-psychiatry movement, Ms. Andre attended and again argued with me about her rights as a patient, and my failure to credit her brain damage or to acknowledge that she had been assaulted by physicians.

She travelled to an international meeting on ECT in Graz, Austria. As chairman of the first session, I called for questions after presentations on the practice of ECT in Europe. She took the floor and again challenged me for my lack of interest in her memory problems and those of other patients whom she alleges had been assaulted by psychiatrists.

On the specific allegations made in her complaint, I find these fabricated and the result of her pathological imagination and thoughts. In response to inquiries from the audience, Professor Sackeim described events in his practice which reflected the problems of the intrusiveness of the anti-psychiatry advocates. He did not mention Ms. Andre by name, nor did he specify any individual. Her association that the description referred to her is a paranoid identification, and is consistent with her psychopathology.

On the more general complaints, the present effort at harassment is part of her present life activity as the leader of the Committee for Truth in Psychiatry. Ms. Andre dedicates her life to challenging psychiatrists, and particularly those interested in convulsive therapy. Her legal suit has not been adjudicated, and she seeks adjudication in the public arena before that in the legal arena.

I urge the APA to hold Dr. Sackeim blameless and return the challenge to Ms. Andre with an appropriate admonition.

Sincerely yours,

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Professor of Psychiatry
and Neurology
Editor, *Convulsive Therapy*
Member, APA Task Forces on
ECT, 1975-1978; 1988-1990