

*J. Letter (Thigpen)*

April 5, 1980

Corbett Thigpen, M.D.  
820 Sebastian Way  
Augusta, Georgia 30902

Dear Dr. Thigpen,

It was kind of you to send me a copy of your film, which I and some of my associates viewed on Monday. I have since sent the film to you separately, and I trust that it will arrive safely. We found the film interesting and a historical gem. The discussion of the history of ECT, the experience with different modifications, the assurance of the reporters in describing your clinical experience did make a good report of the type of practice that has become a hallmark of modern American psychiatry.

We were disappointed with the actual treatment, however. The therapist was unusually busy, serving as psychiatrist, anesthetist, and physiologist. It seemed unfortunate that the presentation was made as a 'modern' method of therapy. Neither the Task Force report nor my own work would be as sanguine about such practice in major medical centers. One would hope that such practice would be limited to those parts of the nation where psychiatrists serve alone and where the usual support services, so common now in major cities, were unavailable.

I also thank you for your letter and the reprints. I am assured that you find the use of pentelenetetrazol (Metrazol) useful in securing a seizure in some patients, for this application is not widely known or practiced. However, the large number of seizures you propose for schizophrenic patients is a conclusion that is not supported by the data available to us in the literature. Indeed, the conclusion is that ECT is only occasionally useful in cases of schizophrenia, and that the use of many treatments, spaced at three times a week is of limited usefulness. The recommendation of the use of regressive treatment, however, remains open, following the work of Exner and Murillo who seem to find that such multiple treatments particularly useful in therapy resistant psychotic patients. But in their experience it is not the total number of seizures that seems to be the controlling variable, but the frequency of the seizures and the organic mental syndrome induced.

Again, my thanks for the opportunity to see this historic film. My regards.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.