

March 25, 1983

Robert Arnot, M.D.
Wellesley Hills Medical Center
422 Worcester Street
Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts 02181

Dear Dr. Arnot,

Thank you for bringing your two recent reports on the mode of action of ECT to my attention. Your support of an electrical theory of the ECT process is indeed interesting. However, as we and others have noted, the concept that the electric current or the seizure 'is to interrupt the ongoing cerebral circuits so that the brain may then start to function again in a more normal manner with the disturbing pathological circuits omitted' (pg 303) fails to detail how the brain (or the seizure) knows which circuits are normal and which are disturbing. Such a theory is reminiscent of the 'bad cell' hypothesis of insulin coma therapy espoused by Manfred Sakel, and seems to require some additional operational details.

Such concepts help us to picture the events of the process. I note that you planned to publish two additional reports in Diseases of the Nervous System after the one on psychological factors. Have the issues on Physical and Chemical observations, and Clinical Results appeared ?

My regards.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry