

F. Letters

December 23, 1976

Mr. Harry Henderson
Editor
World Wide Medical Press, Inc.
880 Third Avenue
New York 10022

Dear Mr. Henderson,

For once, the reporting is accurate, and I congratulate you on the summary that you provide. I have a few comments that may be helpful.

1. The effect of the Massachusetts reporting system has been salutary, and the follow up report by Grosser in the Massachusetts Journal of Mental Health, Spring 1975 could be referred to. The report finds that the institutions reporting their EST experience seem to be following the guidelines set by the medical community and such self monitoring is much to be preferred to the California model of legal restraint and interference.

2. Leonard Cammer is a curmudgeon, representing the opinion of himself and a few die-hards. He and his associates fail to see that with the development of third party payers, and government funding, there will be regulation of medical practice. Whether the regulation is made by the State and external to the medical community, or by the medical community is the issue. The members of the APA Task Force seem inclined to develop models of education and self regulation and it is probable that their thoughtful recommendations will be accepted by the 20,000 members of the APA. I believe you give undue weight to a very minority opinion by quoting his (Leonard's) very conservative and 19th Century approach at length.

3. Dr Tien is a poorly trained, misguided therapist who has produced many articles of uncontrolled, 'studies'. His approach is far from the mainstream of world psychiatry and again, you do the serious students of psychiatry a disservice by quoting his remarks. Better you should have quoted Dr. Friedberg, a young resident from Oregon who did present the negative views of EST rather forcefully in the same session at which Greenblatt and I spoke. The American Psychiatric Association has decided, that despite the ad hominem and erroneous nature of Friedberg's remarks, the American Journal of Psychiatry will publish his remarks as well as those of the other panellists at the session you quote. I would urge you to relegate

Dr. Tien to his private world. Incidentally, your references to the new society in the same article as the established society suggests that somehow, the new group represents the professionals who have an active interest in EST. That is not so, since few of the authorities that you may wish to quote and who have carried the burden of research these many decades have joined Cammer and Tien.

4. Since that presentation, Avery and Winokur, in a very forceful article in the AMA Archives of General Psychiatry (33:1029-1037, 1976) indicate the importance of EST in reducing the incidence of death in depressive illnesses. Their findings are striking for deaths by suicide, but equally for deaths from all causes. I commend their article to you. Another important study is that of McCabe (Amer J. Psychiat. 133:688-691, 1976) who finds EST as effective, and often more so, than other treatments of mania. The importance of his review is the data that the time for response is notably shorter for EST than for drug therapies-- a finding that should serve to reduce the mortality among manic patients who frequently succumb during the first week of treatment.

I trust these comments are helpful. While I have good press photos, I regret that I am of sound mind and do not wish to have my face presented in the lay press. My opinions matter little; the results of my research do, and when someone wishes to describe my laboratory's work, I would be pleased to supplement the reports with pictures.

My regards and best wishes for a successful 1977.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry