

December 30, 1982

Joseph Schildkraut, M.D.
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Dear Joe,

Congratulations on your appointment as editor of the Journal of Psychiatric Research. It must be a good challenge to direct an ongoing enterprise, and I am confident that you and Merton will work hard to maintain its reputation.

Your invitation to 'share views about growing points in psychiatric research, as well as areas not well covered by other journals' stimulates my reply. Convulsive therapy remains an active treatment in psychiatry. In 1984, it will have been used for 50 years — a remarkable longevity when we consider that the average half-life of medical treatments is much shorter. In the 1940's and 1950's, there was the Electroshock Research Association which focussed issues about ECT, and they published their annual proceedings in Confinia Neurologica. When that association was prematurely digested by the Society of Biological Psychiatry in the mid-1960's, the central focus ended. Of course, we expected the treatment to be replaced by drugs. But that has not happened.

There is a significant gap. No journal and no society has taken the leadership as a focus for convulsive therapy research. As a consequence, the papers are scattered. Recently, I did a survey of the Medline citations under 'electroconvulsive therapy', and the attached data resulted.

ECT is an important treatment of depression. Indeed, I cannot see how any research into the mode of action of antidepressants or the pathophysiology of depressive illness can ignore the ECT process.

Considering your fling into convulsive therapy research, perhaps you and your co-editor would want to consider a trial period in which you would establish a section on ECT and invite review papers, conference reports, etc. My estimate of the literature is a publication rate of 11 papers/month and increasing.

My best wishes for your and the Journal's success.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry