

*J. Ulett's
Lambourn, J*

August 17, 1979

Drs. J. Lambourn
Herrison Hospital
Dorset, England

Dear Dr. Lambourn,

This letter is in the nature of a belated thank you for sending me a detailed version of your ECT study comparing full ECT with simulated ECT. It is difficult to fault your study, for some of the controls which seemed necessary (and omitted from the BJP article) were included in your study, notably measurement of seizure duration and evidence of bilaterality of seizures. Your findings remain inexplicable in the face of our experience, and perhaps the best explanation may lie in the question raised by Jan-Otto Ottosson. He notes that not every seizure is full in the brain, and indeed, in our studies of the EEG effects of ECT and flurothyl seizures, we did find patients in whom the EEG changes were astonishingly small compared to others; yet we believed we had achieved full seizures and had measured their duration. While this may be an explanation, it remains a conjecture at this junction.

In our study of subconvulsive-convulsive ECT, we used a minimum of 12 seizures and our data fell compellingly on the side of convulsive therapy being more effective than subconvulsive. The best description is found in my book which has just been published by Raven Press.

Your data are puzzling and one would hope that in addition to your further studies of different currents on the ECT process, that the measurement of the seizure itself may be done to assess whether the differences in outcome may be related to ~~ancient~~ difference-- shorter EEG seizure time, less spiking activity, etc as suggested by Ottosson.

The only regret that I find in the aftermath of your study is the opportunity given Dr. Kalinowsky to harangue the psychiatric readership with his antipathy to unilateral ECT. I cannot believe that this factor alone explained the difference in outcome, but perhaps it was a factor. (Our studies and those of Ulett were with bilateral electrodes.)

These thoughts are inconclusive, as you can tell. I think your study well done and I congratulate you and Dr. Gill on carrying it out. I can only hope that you will persevere to explain the difference between your findings and some of the others in the literature.

Good luck in your work.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.