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Editor- OP ED Page
New York Times
Times Square, New York 10036

Sir:

The opinion piece by Sergei Batrovin on December 31 was of special interest as it described the administration of "sulfazine shocks -- a torturous type of 'treatment', prohibited in the West, that puts the patient into coma, then causes convulsions and many hours of unbearable pain."

I sought to identify the compound 'sulfazine' and a search of various sources elicited no clear identification. A search of the International Pharmaceutical Abstracts found one citation to a sulfonamide derivative, and it is unlikely that such a compound has the effects cited by the author.

I would be grateful for a clarification. I am unaware of any substance that produces the effects cited; nor am I aware of any interdicted treatment which may do so. The closest is the use of high doses of insulin for a treatment known as insulin coma. Such a treatment was widely used and was replaced by pharmacotherapy. I am not aware of any prohibition or proscription in any Western country, nor am I aware of any instance of 'many hours of unbearable pain' in this treatment.

Is it possible that the author is exercising a high degree of hyperbole?

Thank you for any help in this interesting matter.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry