

November 29, 1965

*J. letters*

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Dear Jim:

The punitive theory of electroshock treatment is best expressed by ABSE. I do not know of any control study of electroshock and painful subthreshold electroshock. There are a number of reports in which patients received subthreshold or suprathreshold treatments under pentothal. These include the one published by George Ulett, those from my laboratory at Hillside, and that of Norman Q. Brill.

The reference to ward doctors and authors rating clinical improvement and patients never knowing who got what treatment, is common to all three studies. Your recollection that only those receiving induced convulsions were clinically improved is correct for both our findings and those of Ulett. The report by Brill indicated that our groups, convulsive and subconvulsive did equally poorly. It was my opinion that the reason for this observation lay in the selection of patients. Brill worked with the Veterans Administration depressives. These are composed largely of hypochondriacal, recurrent type inadequate personality group of depressives. Convulsive therapy was less helpful in this group than in any other. The discrimination between convulsive and subconvulsive, therefore, was very poor.

The citations are attached. I regret that it took me a few days to answer your note, but I have been away so much of the time that I am taking the occasion over this holiday weekend to answer all my mail.

I would be pleased to see a copy of your report when it is completed.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry

MF:kp