

FDA Testimony
1-27-11

My name is John Breeding. I have been a Texas psychologist for almost 30 years, and am a founding member of the Coalition for the Abolition of Electroshock in Texas (CAEST). I have been active for 20 years in efforts to abolish or at least limit the use of electroshock because of its severe danger and lack of efficacy. Although we narrowly failed to accomplish a total ban on electroshock in Texas, the procedure is banned for children under age 16. Extra safeguards are in place for the elderly. I am giving you a hard copy of the 2 page letter I submitted as written testimony, as well as one article I have written on the subject, called "Electroshock and Informed Consent."

Electroshock is extremely dangerous, so of course I am very strongly against the reclassification of the machines. Two very experienced neurologist friends of mine submitted written testimony but could not be here today.

Dr. John Friedberg is the author of *Shock Treatment Is Not Good for Your Brain*. Here is what he said:

The intentional induction of convulsions should be abolished. In my entire career I never met an epileptic who benefited from their seizures. I never had a patient tell me a seizure leaves them feeling happier. ECT causes memory loss in all cases, dramatic brain damage in some. ECT has been grandfathered in because it could never meet today's standards for safety and efficacy. Abolish the intentional induction of convulsions. Abolish ECT.

I completely agree with Dr. Friedberg. I have seen the research showing brain damage and memory loss, and I have sat with the victims of electroshock. I have witnessed their profound losses and disabilities. I personally know at least three people who now have permanent seizure disorders **as a result of** electroshock! I know many more who are unable to work and on permanent disability **as a result of** electroshock!

As a psychologist, I appreciate what Dr. Fred Baughman had to say:

Throughout the more than 3 decades of my neurological practice I have encountered patients treated with ECT who had permanent erasures of parts of their memory... [P]sychiatrists may wish to call

ECT... ‘therapeutic’ but [it] never achieves anything but to diminish adaptability in the broadest sense and cannot be called therapeutic or medically justifiable....

All ECT and all ECT machines should be banned for use in human beings. They are nothing but instruments of knowing, willful abuse and control of fellow human beings — for profit.

That my own mental health profession systematically inflicts brain damage is a shame and a disgrace. That several electroshock survivors are here today to testify is nothing short of incredible testimony to the courage and resilience of the human spirit. There would be countless more if the procedure were not so terribly damaging and frightening.

Anyone who is serious about evaluating electroshock needs to read this book: *Doctors of Deception: What They Don't Want You to Know about Shock Treatment*, by researcher and electroshock survivor, Linda Andre. It is the best up-to-date document on shock, and makes it clear that the reason we are even having this conversation today is a victory of public relations over science.

The science is clear about the basic questions of risk and benefit. Electroshock is not safe; it is extremely dangerous. It always causes brain damage, and the most obvious evidence of this is memory loss. It sometimes causes death. While the American Psychiatric Association argues that electroshock deaths are rare, one study published in 1993 reported 10 deaths among 37 patients, 80 and older, who underwent electroshock. . In the mid-1990s, the Texas Department of Mental Health reported 21 deaths among an estimated 2,000 patients who were electroshocked. .

The electroshock machine industry has consistently ignored FDA requirements for evidence on the safety and efficacy of their machines. I suppose it is a political question as to why your agency has consistently refused to apply the law and hold the industry accountable. For now, I urge you to do the right thing, and leave these brain-damaging machines in the high-risk category. Thank you.