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words

The electroshock riddle: effective but rejected

Max Fink

Full remission of a psychiatric illness is rare. For marketing approval of a medicine we accept a 50% reduction in symptoms as statistically better than the 40% reported with placebo. By contrast, the electroshock experience has greater than 80% remission rates in melancholia, mania and catatonia. Yet electroshock is disparaged and legislated against. Many reasons are given. Fear of electricity. Abandonment by psychiatrists of a hands-on experience in office-based practices. Antagonism by psychotherapists, psychologists, Scientologists and former patients. All of the above? Physicians have induced seizures effectively and safely for 75 years. Is it not time to change our attitude?

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