

July 2, 2020

**CALL FOR IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY
IN NHS TRUSTS PENDING RESEARCH INTO EFFICACY AND SAFETY**

Open Letter to: Peter Wyman, Chair of the Care Quality Commission

We, the undersigned health/mental health practitioners and researchers, and recipients of electroconvulsive therapy [ECT] and their family members, note that the recent 40 page review of ECT research,¹ co-authored by Professor Irving Kirsch, of Harvard Medical School, found no evidence that ECT is superior to placebo.

We therefore endorse the review's recommendation that:

Given the high risk of permanent memory loss and the small mortality risk, the longstanding failure to determine whether or not ECT works means that **its use should be immediately suspended until a series of well designed, randomised, placebo controlled studies have investigated whether there really are any significant benefits** against which the proven significant risks can be weighed.

Professor Richard Bentall (Sheffield University) analysed this review and concluded that 'ECT is a classic failure of evidence-based medicine.'²

We request that ECT be immediately suspended throughout the NHS, pending research to determine its efficacy and safety.

1. READ, J., KIRSCH, I., McGRATH, L. (2020). Electroconvulsive Therapy for depression: A Review of the quality of ECT vs sham ECT trials and meta-analyses. *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry*, doi:10.1891/EHPP-D-19-00014
2. BENTALL, R. (2020). <http://cepuk.org/2020/06/04/guest-blog-by-richard-bentall-ect-is-a-classic-failure-of-evidence-based-medicine/>

FROM: Professor John Read, Clinical Psychology, University of East London

On behalf of:

Dr Irving Kirsch, Associate Director, Program in Placebo Studies, Harvard Medical School;
Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Hull University, UK

Dr Sue Cunliffe, ECT recipient, Worcester
(*'Loss of independence and job. Brain damaged, humiliated'*)

Professor William Cunliffe, Dermatology (retired), Father of ECT recipient, Leeds
(*'Daughter experienced long-term memory loss'*)

Andy Luff, ECT recipient, Farnham
(*'Violated, isolated, humiliated, lost, numb, disbelieved, abandoned, lonely'*)

Una Parker, ECT survivor, Leeds
(*'Lost confidence in memory and life. Damaged, confused, empty'*).

Emma Xxxxx, Wife of ECT recipient, Winchester
(*'Memory fried, executive dysfunction. Can't work or live independently'*)

Jenny Xxxxx, ECT recipient, Essex
(*'Traumatic. Hard to live after ECT'*)

Sue Xxxxx, ECT recipient, West Midlands
(*'ECT mirrored the sadistic abuse I experienced in childhood'*)

Margarita Xxxxx, Mother of ECT recipient, London
(*'Damaged my son's cognitive functions and chances of recovery'*)

Professor Rhiannon Corcoran, Psychology & Public Mental Health, University of Liverpool;
and Daughter of ECT recipient. (*'Didn't work. Mum took her own life'*)

Dr Patrick Bracken, Consultant Psychiatrist, West Cork

Dr Rex Haigh, Consultant Psychiatrist in Medical Psychotherapy, Berkshire NHS;
Medical Director, Khiron Clinics

Professor Joanna Moncrieff, Psychiatrist, University College London

Dr Clive Sherlock, Psychiatry, Oxford

Dr. Philip Thomas, Consultant Psychiatrist (retired), Formerly Professor of Philosophy
Diversity & Mental Health, University of Central Lancashire (retired)

Professor Sami Timimi, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Lincolnshire
Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Fairuz Awenat, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Wilmslow, Cheshire

James Barnes, Psychotherapist, Exeter

Dr Samantha Bowe, Principal Clinical Psychologist, Psychosis Research Unit, GMMH NHS Trust.

Professor Emeritus Mary Boyle, Clinical Psychology, University of East London (retired)

Anne Cooke, Clinical Director, Clinical Psychology Doctoral Programme, Canterbury Christ Church University

Dr Steven Coles, Clinical Psychologist, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Professor John Cromby, Clinical Psychology, University of Leicester

Dr James Davies, Medical Anthropologist, Roehampton University

Baylissa Frederick, Psychotherapist, Paisley, Scotland

Dr Jim Geekie, Clinical Psychologist, NHS Lothian and NHS Education for Scotland

Dr Anne Guy, Psychotherapist, Basingstoke

Dr Chris Harrop, Clinical Psychologist, West London NHS Trust

Professor David Harper, Clinical Psychology, University of East London

Dr Lucy Johnstone, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Independent Trainer, Bristol.

Dr Angela Kennedy, Clinical Psychology, Durham

Professor Peter Kinderman, Clinical Psychology, Liverpool University

Dr Warren Larkin, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Lancashire

Dr Rufus May, Clinical Psychologist, Lead for In-Patient Psychology service, Bolton

Dr Trishna Patel, Clinical Psychology, University of East London

Dr Che Rosebert, Director of External Relations, Association of Clinical Psychologists UK

Dr Gary Sidley, Clinical Psychologist (retired), Rossendale, Lancashire

Dr Akima Thomas OBE, Psychotherapist and Clinical Director of Women and Girls Network, London

Dr Filippo Varese, Clinical Psychology, University of Manchester

Jo Watson, Psychotherapist, Birmingham

COPIED TO:

All NHS Trusts using ECT

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Nadine Dorries, Minister for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Patient Safety

Jon Ashworth, Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, Shadow Mental Health Minister

Chris Bryant, MP

Barbara Keeley, MP

Jeane Freeman, Scottish Minister for Health and Sport

Clare Haughey, Scottish Minister for Mental Health

Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services, Wales

Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services, Wales

Robin Swann, Health Minister for Northern Ireland

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Medicines and Medical Devices

Simon Stevens, Chief Executive, National Health Service in England

Vanessa Ford, NHS Director of Nursing and Quality:

Public Health England (PHE)

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

UK Acquired Brain Injury Forum (UKABIF)

Headway (The Brain Injury Association)

Royal College of Anaesthetists

Royal College of Psychiatrists

Royal College of Nursing

Royal College of Physicians

Royal College of General Practitioners

British Psychological Society

UK Council for Psychotherapy

National Counselling Society

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Mind

Rethink
National Survivor User Network
Hearing Voices Network