Countywide Services Agency

Department of Health and Human Services

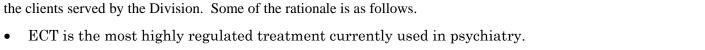
Mental Health Services

Dorian Kittrell, MFT Executive Director Mental Health Treatment Center

May 27, 2008

Sandy Damiano, PhD Chief, Adult Mental Health Services Sacramento County Division of Mental Health

Dear Dr. Damiano:



I strongly urge the Division to continue to have electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) as a treatment alternative available to

- In the majority of cases of ECT in Sacramento County, and in essentially every case of ECT at the Mental Health Treatment Center, California law requires that the case be reviewed by three different psychiatrists and the patient's attorney before the treatment can be administered. In the review process, if any of the four disagree, then either the treatment is not given or a judge must weigh the evidence and decide.
- ECT at the Treatment Center has been life-saving for some patients so severely depressed or catatonic that they cannot eat/drink and have had to make multiple trips to local hospital emergency rooms to be medically treated for dehydration and malnutrition.
- ECT works quickly, usually producing significant improvement within a week or two, and allows the patient to leave the hospital weeks earlier than might otherwise be possible.
- For elderly, frail patients, ECT can be medically safer than extended medication trials of multiple medications with compounded side effects.
- There are some patients for whom ECT is the only effective treatment that allows them to live in the community.
- At the Treatment Center, ECT is always a treatment of last resort for the most severely ill patients with Major Depression, usually with psychosis, or with catatonia (psychotic immobility).
- Removing ECT as a therapeutic option for Sacramento County patients would cause harm and impose undue suffering for those severely ill patients who would otherwise be able to be recovering in the community.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if I can provide additional information on this matter. Sincerely,

Martin Leamon, MD Medical Director

Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry

University of California, Davis



County of

Sacramento

Terry Schutten, County Executive Penelope Clarke, Agency Administrator Lynn Frank, Department Director Leland Tom, Division Director