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The Firing Line

- **The shocking damage**

We appreciate Jihae Min's June 29 article on our second protest at Seton Shoal Creek Hospital. The Coalition for the Abolition of Electroshock in Texas has been working with the Seton Board for months, sharing data and our desire that Shoal Creek Hospital stop using electroshock. We are now making Austin a shock-free zone.

I want to clarify certain inaccuracies in the article. First, there is no law requiring psychiatrists to try drugs first. When drugs fail, electroshock is used. Unfortunately, this leads to horrific practices like shock treatment, also known as ECT or EST. This is why it is up to us to ensure that our community be safe and of real benefit.

More alarming is that the professional coordinating electroshock for Seton, Mary Ann Dale, actually believes shock does not cause brain damage. This is the urgency of the CAEST campaign. Even the country's most ardent proponents of electroshock know better:

"The principal complications of EST are death, brain damage, memory impairment, and spontaneous seizures. These complications are far more serious than those with which EST has been compared." (Psychiatrist Max Fink, 1978; quoted in Leonard Frank's Electroshock Quotations, www.endofshock.com)

The evidence is clear that this procedure causes brain damage, memory loss, and a host of other harmful effects. Ms. Dale's denial of the evidence, as shown by sham ECT studies and ECT outcome research, is different. Fact and opinion are often confused. The use of Electroshock in Texas publicly invites Ms. Dale and Seton to a public debate on the facts.

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