

Attn: Medical Reporter / City/State Reporter

For Immediate Release

November 1, 2006

Press Release

Date and time: Wednesday, November 1, 2006, 9:00am to 10:15am.

Location: Seider Springs Park, South side of 38th, East side of Shoal Creek, adjacent to Seton Shoal Creek Hospital, Austin, Texas.

Contact: John Breeding, PhD, Coalition for the Abolition of Electroshock in Texas (512) 799-3610

e-mail: john@wildestcolts.com

Psychiatric Electroshock (ECT) in Austin: A Rally to Protest Brain Damaging Electroshock at Seton Shoal Creek Hospital

November 1, 2006

Electroshock (electroconvulsive treatment, ECT) causes brain damage, memory loss, learning disability, seizures, and a small but significant number of deaths. Electroshock is not only a medical issue; it is a public safety issue; it is a human rights issue.

The Coalition for the Abolition of Electroshock in Texas (CAEST) held its third rally in 6 months to draw attention to the practice of psychiatric electroshock in Austin. Seton Shoal Creek Hospital is one of the last facilities in Central Texas (Austin's St. David's hospital is another) that continues to use electroshock. According to the state's annual ECT facility summary, 163 of 1656 people electroshocked in Texas between September 2003 and August 2004 were Seton Shoal Creek patients. Approximately 2/3 were women, mostly of menopausal or perimenopausal age; 7 of the 163 were over 80.

John Breeding, PhD, spokesperson for CAEST, said, "The twin facts, documented in the scientific literature, that electroshock always causes brain damage and that it generally has no lasting positive effect, ought to be enough to stop Seton Shoal Creek from continuing this barbaric practice. Perhaps even more astounding is a third phenomenon—our Coalition considers it remarkable that recipients of a reportedly beneficial and benevolent medical 'treatment,' psychiatric electroshock, afterwards declare that treatment to be harmful and dangerous, and organize as activists determined to abolish the treatment."

CAEST member, Dianna Loper, has written about the ECT-caused memory loss she experienced: "I had 28 ECTs in all. And when it was all over, I was not able to remember my own child's name. Some of the lost memories returned, but there were others that never did. I had to learn many things all over again; it took me 20 years to partially catch up to where I thought I had been before." Two CAEST members suffer permanent disability from the effects of ECT, including seizures and devastating memory loss.

Austin musician, Don Erickson, spoke at the rally. Mr. Erickson received 10 ECT treatments in June and July of 2005 at Seton Shoal Creek. After the last outpatient session, Don's records show that he was so disorganized and suicidally desperate that the hospital admitted him for 10 days. Don stated, "I was feeling confused and desperate for help. Now that I have some distance, I think of electroshock as rape of the soul, and I want this assault to stop!"

Kathy Scogin, an Austin nurse, also spoke at the rally. Scogin's sister was electroshocked at Seton Shoal Creek between 30 and 50 times between September 2005 and June 2006; as is common, Kathy's sister cannot remember the number of times she received ECT. Ms. Scogin said, "As a result of electroshock, my sister is now unable to work and is currently on disability. Seton Shoal Creek Hospital has stolen our lives. They have got to stop using electroshock on people."

"It is a tragic irony that psychiatrists deliberately induce seizures in patients," said Lee Spiller, Director of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights of Texas. "For more than 2,000 years, conventional physicians have been trying to prevent seizure disorders." Mr. Spiller also pointed out that psychiatric symptoms are often caused by underlying, undiagnosed medical problems. He stated, "Our Coalition wants Seton Shoal Creek to change their methods. We invite the hospital to become a model psychiatric wellness program offering thorough medical screening for these underlying conditions."