

ECT: Reviled—Or Revered?

Shock therapy. Few other phrases have done as much as these two words to conjure up unpleasant, notorious images that stigmatize mental illness.

Shock therapy, better known today (and preferably so) as electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), was once a mainstay of treatment for those with severe and persistent depression or other mental illness in the 1950's and 1960's. However, the devastating loss of memory and other serious side effects experienced by ECT patients created an uproar in the general community. This, in turn, led to its virtual banishment by the psychiatric community and constraints placed upon it by states and government health agencies.

Yet ECT has staged a comeback in recent years and is again in the limelight. More than 100,000 people have ECT treatments each year, making it a procedure more common than knee replacement surgery. And one of them is none other than Kitty Dukakis, wife of former Massachusetts governor and 1988 presidential candidate Michael Dukakis.

She writes about her

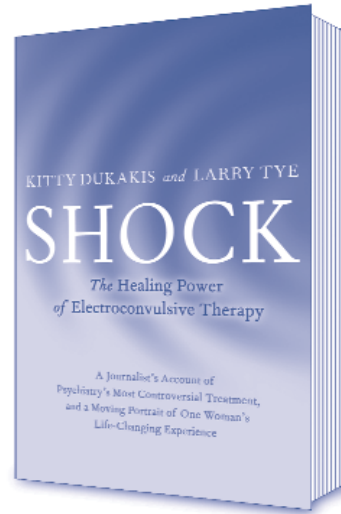
unrelenting depression, and her decision to undergo ECT starting in 2001, in her book co-written with journalist Larry Tye, entitled, *SHOCK: The Healing Power of Electroconvulsive Therapy*.

She states in *SHOCK* what led her to ECT: "It is June 20, 2001, Michael's and my 38th wedding anniversary. It also is the end of my fourth month of depression, my crisis period. ...I have run out of options and I don't want to drink. ...Today I am going to try the only thing left: electro-convulsive therapy."

Like many, she had been unaware that the procedure was an option until three years before her initial treatment. She also had ample reason to be anxious: In 1951, her husband's brother had been treated with ECT after a suicide attempt. To the family, he was never the same.

The treatment has worked for Dukakis, though not without side effects. Like many ECT patients, she has memory lapses, though nowhere near as severe as during the treatment's "dark ages" in the '50s and '60s. She has no memory of her 38th anniversary trip to Paris prior to her first ECT. But Dukakis considers it a small price to pay for having her life back: "It has given me a sense of control, of hope."

ECT remains controversial, a treatment very quietly used as a last resort. But for Kitty Dukakis, it was a godsend.



SHOCK: The Healing Power of Electroconvulsive Therapy, by Kitty Dukakis and Larry Tye, Penguin Books, 2006. To purchase from Amazon.com and help NAMI at the same time, go to www.nami.org, and click on the NAMI store link.

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facilities are represented on the Council. The Council provides outreach to national veterans' service organizations; educates Congress, the VA, and the Administration on the special challenges faced by veterans with severe mental illnesses; and works with NAMI state and affiliate offices on issues affecting veterans.

We want the VA to commit to reforming its mental health

programs and to using all available resources to provide the quality care our veterans deserve. It is our goal to make sure that the problems faced by soldiers at Walter Reed are a bureaucratic anomaly.

The answer to my earlier question—what is to become of returning soldiers in need of care—is very simple. We must take care of the men and women who gave themselves, literally, to

protect us. Slow progress is being made, but much more needs to be done. With your support, NAMI will continue to work hard to create a system of care that we can be proud of.

Michael Fitzpatrick,
Executive Director

NAMI Hosts Third Annual Research Gala Celebration— “Unmasking Mental Illness”

NAMI will host its third Annual Research Gala—“Unmasking Mental Illness”—on Wednesday, October 17, 2007. The evening will begin with a

cocktail reception followed by a seated dinner. The highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the Mind of America Scientific Research Award to a scientist

whose efforts have resulted in ground-breaking research contributing significantly to a better understanding and treatment of mental illness.

Proceeds from the evening

will benefit NAMI’s programs to improve the quality of life for those affected by mental illness. Attendees include members of Congress and other political leaders, celebrities, and an honor roll of scientists and researchers leading the effort to understand, treat, and prevent mental illness. The Gala spotlights NAMI’s commitment to promoting research leading to better treatments, and eventually, cures.

Last year’s event featured Academy Award-winning actress and Honorary Chair Patty Duke, who opened with a speech about her personal experience of living with bipolar disorder and the importance of research in finding treatments, causes and cures. She presented the 2006 NAMI Mind of America Scientific Research Award to Charles L. Bowden, M.D., for his research on bipolar disorder. Co-chairs included U.S. Senator Susan Collins, renowned

researcher and author Kay Redfield Jamison, and Congressman Pete Stark. Singer Judy Collins provided the entertainment.

This year’s Gala promises to be every bit as spectacular as the last. Every year, scientific advances bring the promise of better treatments and an eventual cure for major mental illnesses. The 2007 Gala will, as always, honor those dedicated researchers who commit their professional lives to helping people living with mental illnesses, as well as grassroots advocates and elected leaders who work to ensure that mental illness is a national priority.

The 2007 Gala Chair is Ann Pincus. The Gala will take place in the Andrew H. Mellon Auditorium at 1301 Constitution Avenue, N.W., in Washington, D.C.

For more information or to become a sponsor, contact Lauren Chrissos at (703)516-7967 or visit our web site at www.nami.org.



2006 Gala Honorary chair Patty Duke and Co-chair Ann Pincus

Blogs Away!

NAMI Blog Now On The Web

NAMI introduced its new blog with an inaugural post from NAMI Executive Director, Mike Fitzpatrick. In his post, he highlights the sad condition of America’s mental health care system, illustrated with examples directly from Helpline requests. Go to www.nami.org and click on the NAMI Blog logo, or go to <http://blog.nami.org>. Read what others living with mental illnesses have to say or post your own comments.



NAMI Spotlight On: Veterans and Mental Health



John Bradley

John M. Bradley has spent much of his 36-year career working on behalf of veterans. After leaving the military in the early 1970s, he

worked in an alcohol rehabilitation unit at a Veterans Administration medical center. It was there that he first encountered mental health as a serious health issue affecting veterans.

He is now working as a Washington-based consultant with NAMI's Veterans Council to help raise its visibility and clout with Congress and the administration as part of our quest to ensure better mental health care treatment for veterans and active-duty military.

Bradley is a fount of knowledge about, and has extensive experience with, the VA—its history, bureaucracies, its politics, and policies.

"Interestingly enough, the VA [Department of Veterans Affairs] was the leader in dealing with schizophrenia in the '30s and '40s," Bradley said. "The VA

created hallmark programs for treating schizophrenia; they were the leader in biomedical research to find ways to ameliorate the symptoms." Indeed, according to Bradley, it was the VA's research programs that led to the development of Thorazine, the first effective pharmacologic treatment for the illness.

Bradley's knowledge and experience, coupled with a curiosity as to how Congress affects VA activities, led him to spend more than a decade working with Congressional VA committees and sub-committees in various capacities. Bradley's last position was staff director of the full Veterans Affairs Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. He retired from federal service in 2005.

His work with NAMI's Veterans Council has already had an impact on VA appropriations and policy.

The Council took the VA to task for the moribund status of its Congressionally-authorized advisory Committee on Care of Severely and Chronically Mentally Ill Veterans (SMI). The committee, of which NAMI's Veterans Council is a part, now meets more regularly to carry out its mandate to help the VA determine policy and shape programs on mental health care.

The Council's testimony was also instrumental in getting an estimated \$6.6 billion added to the VA's FY 2008 budget, as well as in the VA's receiving \$100 million in supplemental appropriations for FY 2007—just for mental health.

But having the money is only part of the story. It takes time for money to reach consumers and their families in the form of improved services and programs, once the money is in place. But getting it "in hand" can be the hard part.

For example, in 2006, millions earmarked for specific mental health projects were not spent at all. Those funds "lapsed" or were not used, and thus lost. The VA "couldn't spend it fast enough," according to Bradley. A

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A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Reader:

The news concerning the treatment injured combat veterans were receiving at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., was profoundly disturbing to me, my colleagues at NAMI, and the mental health community at large—indeed, to the whole country. Soldiers who have lost limbs or suffered head injuries were forced to navigate layers of bureaucracy and live in substandard conditions in order to receive the care they were due. It's challenging enough when one is healthy, but almost impossible when one is recovering from physical and mental injuries.

While the problems at Walter Reed are certainly severe, I worry that similar scenarios are playing out elsewhere in other U.S. military and VA hospitals across the country. Access to quality mental health care for active-duty personnel, veterans, and their dependents has always

been problematic, but the challenge of getting care when needed has grown dramatically as more troops return from Iraq and Afghanistan.



Conflicts a world away have led to significant increases in the number of soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder, other mental illness, and severe brain injuries. We read of soldiers committing suicide, either on duty or after coming home. Many of the soldiers are young; some will need life-long care. What is to become of them?

NAMI has worked for many years on Capitol Hill to ensure that attention is paid to veterans' mental health issues. NAMI gave testimony on Capitol Hill this spring at the VA's budget appropriations hearings, and the nomination hearings for Dr. Michael Kussman, the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Health. We have worked as part of a strong coalition to give

recommendations for change to the Commission that was set up by President Bush to look into the care available to returning veterans.

NAMI's Veterans Council was established a number of years ago, in part, to better focus our response and to ensure that the mental health care needs of veterans, active duty personnel, and their dependents are met. Members from the VA's 21 VISNs (Veterans Integrated Service Network) that manage VA field

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The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

Colonial Place Three
 2107 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300
 Arlington, VA 22201-3042
 Phone: (800) 950-NAMI
 Fax: (703) 524-9094
 TDD: (703) 516-7227

Calendar of Events

Dates	Events
August 28-30	Third Annual CIT National Conference (Memphis, TN)
October 11	Mental Illness Awareness Week (NAMI affiliates and state organizations, nationwide)
October 11	Bipolar Awareness Day, "Building Community, Taking Action" (NAMI affiliates and state organizations, nationwide)
October 17	"Unmasking Mental Illness," NAMI National Research Gala (Mellon Building, Washington, D.C.)



Mike Fitzpatrick, Hugh Laurie, and "friend"

House Stars Help Raise Funds and Profile for NAMI

The cast, crew and producers from the hit Fox drama *House* were on hand in Los Angeles this past April to kick off a promotion for NAMI, using one of the show's favorite House-isms, "Everybody Lies."

The press conference was held on the sound stage where the show is produced.

"Mental illness is stigmatized and misunderstood in our society, and we're trying to do something about that," said *House* executive producer Katie Jacobs. "We're very fortunate to be celebrating an extremely successful third season for *House*, and we'd like to give something back to a cause we feel is both worthy and overlooked."

"*House* is making an enormous contribution to public education by lending the show's celebrity profile to raise funds," said NAMI Executive Director Mike Fitzpatrick. "On behalf of every individual and family who lives with major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses, NAMI thanks the show and cast. They are making a difference in people's lives."

Members of the cast, including Hugh Laurie, who plays the infamous title character, Dr. House, modeled T-shirts featuring the "Everybody Lies" quote. In May, NAMI ran an online auction that included a t-shirt signed by the entire cast, a cast photo signed by entire cast, the *House* Season 1 DVD signed by Hugh Laurie, a *House* Season 2 DVD signed by Hugh Laurie and an original *House* script signed by the entire cast. A limited number of T-shirts were also made available for sale.

NAMI Honors Exemplary Psychiatrists

Individuals and families who live with mental illnesses selected 18 physicians to receive NAMI's 2007 Exemplary Psychiatrist Award at the annual international meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in San Diego, California.

The 2007 awards focus especially on those doctors who have made substantial contributions to NAMI state or local activities, demonstrating exemplary commitment and expertise in their communities.

"We recognize these exemplary psychiatrists for their contributions to consumer care," said Michael J. Fitzpatrick, NAMI Executive Director. "They are the backbone to the nation's mental health care system. With their help, treatment and recovery for our nation's most vulnerable population is possible."

Here is the list of winners. If a doctor from your community has been honored, contact them to let them know how much you appreciate their service to your community.

- Aparna Vuppala, M.D.Huntsville, AL
- Arakel Davtian, M.D.Los Angeles, CA
- Patricia Guthrie, M.D.Los Angeles, CA
- David E. Goldman, D.O.Springfield, IL
- Susan Slade, M.D.Columbia, KY
- Lani Nicholson, M.D.....Quincy, MA
- Anna Yoo, M.D.....Belmont, MA
- Saaid Khojasteh, M.D.St. Peters, MO
- Ivan Slatten, M.D.Stillwater, MN
- James B. Whitworth, M.D.....Billings, MT
- John Beamer, M.D.Gouverneur, NY
- Kenneth Certa, M.D.Philadelphia, PA
- Barry Wall, M.D.....Cranston, RI
- Richard Whalen, M.D.....Warwick, RI
- Daniel Hicks, M.D.Yankton, SD
- Douglas Gray, M.D.Salt Lake City, UT
- Robert O. Friedel, M.D.Midlothian, VA
- Molli Hinkle, M.D.Port Townsend, WA

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goal Bradley has for NAMI's Veterans Council is that it will work to help ensure Congress develops appropriate oversight of funds earmarked for veterans' mental health care programs, to ensure they are spent for the

purposes intended by Congress. Bradley states: "Veterans' needs, especially those of the newest generation, are at the top of everyone's list, including NAMI's. We know the VA has the capacity to meet the mental health needs

of current and future veterans. Our job is to ensure it does so." And NAMI's Veterans Council, with the help of John Bradley, will no doubt work to make sure that capacity is used to its fullest.

Leadership Alliance Corner

Lately, the media has run a number of stories about the problems veterans and active-duty soldiers, especially those with mental illness or brain injuries, have faced in seeking and getting treatment. According to NAMI's Veterans Council testimony to Congress on the VA's FY 2008 budget, about two out of every ten service members "experience problems of a magnitude about which we should be concerned."

Last year, a doctor from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research reported that findings from a study showed "15-17% of soldiers from combat units screen positive for PTSD when surveyed 3-12 months after returning from deployment to Iraq." Including questions that screened for major depression and generalized anxiety increased the rate to 20%. About 16% of soldiers surveyed had PTSD, depression or anxiety that made it difficult

for them to function—at work or at home.

NAMI is at the forefront of the fight through our Veterans Council, to ensure they have access to quality treatment. The Council is one of the many ways we reach out to communities in need and the people who can help them. Thanks to our many supporters, especially our Leadership Alliance donors, we are able to represent the many communities looking for a voice on mental illness. From consumers of mental health services and their families, including veterans, to the doctors and researchers looking at causes and treatments for mental illness, NAMI is there.

We are always grateful to those who make monetary contributions to support our work. Those gifts sustain a broad spectrum of programs designed to give support, information and advocacy. We are especially thankful for the members of our Leadership Alliance, a group of very special donors who generously give \$500 or more during the calendar year.

As we do each year, we held our "invitation only" luncheon for Leadership Alliance members at NAMI's annual convention in San Diego. This year's luncheon featured Kitty Dukakis and Larry Tye, co-authors of *SHOCK: The Healing Power of Electroconvulsive Therapy*. The book [see related story on Page 5] chronicles Mrs. Dukakis' experience with mental illness and her decision to undergo electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). Their talk was an eye-opener, especially for those who did not realize that ECT was a treatment option. Along with Mrs. Dukakis' personal story are chapters on the history of ECT and information for those considering it as an option.

We would like to have more of you join us for these and other special events to help NAMI in its work on behalf of people and families living with mental illness. To learn more about the Leadership Alliance, please contact Linda Radcliffe at 703-516-7970 or 1-888-999-6264, ext. 7970.

*By Darcy Taylor,
Director of Constituent Relations*

Upcoming 2007 NAMIWalks

This list reflects information available at press time. Please go to www.nami.org for up-to-date information on specific walk sites and dates.

Site	Dates	Site	Dates	Site	Dates
Honolulu, HI	August 4	Orange County (Huntington Bch.), CA....	October 6	Dane County (Madison), WI	October 7
Cleveland, OH	September 8	Des Moines, IA	October 6	Butler County (Hamilton), OH	October 13
Harrisburg, PA	September 15	Lafayette, LA.....	October 6	Bakersfield, CA.....	October 13
Chicago, IL.....	September 23	Jackson, MS	October 6	Las Vegas, NV.....	October 13
Atlanta, GA	September 29	Summit County (Akron), OH	October 6	Lexington, KY.....	October 13
Boise, ID	September 29	Austin, TX	October 6	Warwick, RI	October 13
Charleston, WV	September 29	Fox Valley, WI.....	October 6	Richmond, VA	October 13
Minneapolis/ St. Paul, MN.....	September 29	Concord, NH.....	October 7	Mahoning County (Canfield), OH	October 20
Salt Lake City, UT.....	September 29	Mercer County (Princeton Jct.), NJ	October 7	Riverside, CA	October 27
Detroit, MI	September 30	Pittsburgh, PA	October 7		
Helena, MT	September 30				
Los Angeles, CA	October 6				