

Shock therapy making a comeback

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Electroshock therapy is coming back into favor as a treatment for depression in the United States.

In the last 25 years, the number of U.S. patients undergoing the treatment -- formally known as electroconvulsive therapy -- has tripled to about 100,000, Te Raleigh (N.C.) News & Observer reported Sunday.

The treatment faces a stigma, the newspaper said. Some view it as a form of torture, while others argue it causes permanent mental damage.

The American Psychiatric Association last month agreed to a new examination of literature on the practice.

Even among doctors who use it, there is disagreement about its effects, the newspaper said. Some feel it causes almost no problems, while others feel it can cause problems, but they are outweighed by the good done in some patients.

Both doctors and patients who use it say it is the only treatment that works for some suffering from severe depression.

"It's becoming a treatment of next resort instead of a treatment of last resort," said Dr. Michael A. Hill, a psychiatrist at University of North Carolina Hospitals, who administers the therapy.

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