

Dr. Scott Beach - Can you share some thoughts about how to overcome the stigma of ECT?

Dr. Beach:

In terms of the stigma of ECT it's really hard to overcome. I think the most helpful thing in many ways has been patients who have gone through the experience sharing their stories. Kitty Dukakis, for example, was a very famous advocate for ECT. She did a lot of good in terms of sharing her story and helping to dispel a lot of the myths. And I think we need more of that. I think we need more people who have gone through the experience to really talk positively about their experience because everybody, understandably, thinks immediately of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* or *Requiem for a Dream* or these film portrayals where ECT looks awful. It looks like something that you would never want your family members to get.

As a psychiatrist, I know the opposite is true. If my family member had catatonia that was unresponsive to benzodiazepines or had a severe major depressive disorder, ECT is one of the first treatments I would want them to get because it's one of the most effective treatments. Given how much trust has been eroded in physicians and in the medical system over the last several years, I think patients telling their story is actually probably the thing that's going to reduce stigma the most.