

What has been accomplished with catatonia throughout your career, and what do you wish to see in the future?

Dr. Fink:

I would say that what we've accomplished with catatonia is that in the past 40 years, since the 1980s, we have brought catatonia to the attention of many physicians, and they've learned the rating scale, the test, and the treatment. And so catatonia is treatable once it's recognized.

I would hope that patients to whom ECT is recommended, that they approach the treatment by looking through the literature and finding out that it is a remarkably effective treatment for certain illnesses. Its safety is very high when it's done properly. It is one of the more magical treatments in medicine insofar as it's effective and safe.

My wish would be that any physician who is responsible for the care of a patient, that among his skills is that he recognizes various forms of behaviors that are abnormal and recommends effective treatment. But that's the role of a physician.

A physician — his goal is to make a diagnosis and identify an illness for which we have a treatment, and any physician who recognizes catatonia has an effective treatment in his hands. And so I would say catatonia is a treatable syndrome.