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Memory Impairment in Electroconvulsive Therapy

International Medical News Service

DURHAM, N.C. — Memory impairment for an autobiographic episode occurring just prior to electroconvulsive therapy is greater following bilateral than following unilateral nondominant shock, say Walter F. Daniel, of the Veterans Administration Medical Center, and his associates.

Sinusoidal stimulation did not produce significantly greater autobiographic or verbal amnesia than did brief pulse stimulation, in contrast with results in other studies. The greater retrograde amnesia following bilateral than following unilateral nondominant electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) found in this study is consistent with other reports, the investigators say (*Biol. Psychiatry* 17:919-24, 1982).

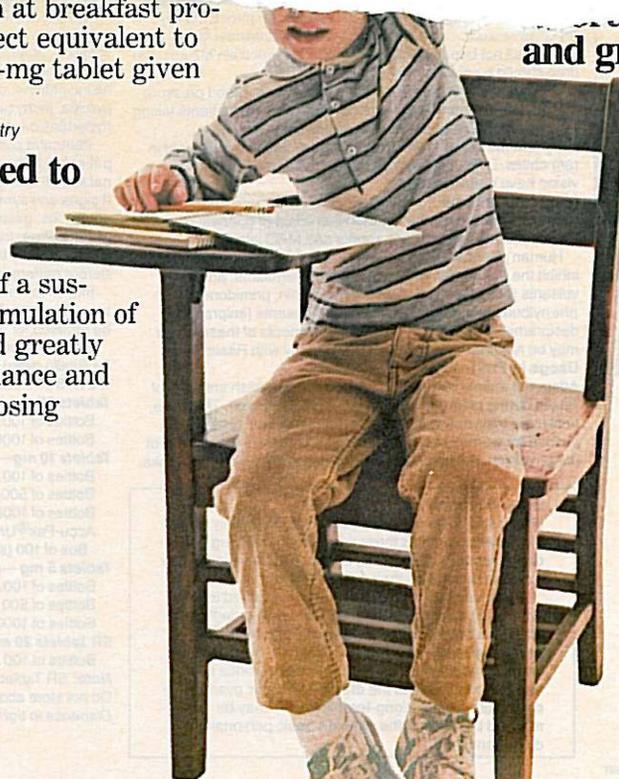
Forgetting a simple autobiographic episode is not trivial. Similar ECT-induced autobiographic memory failures, if added across a course of ECT, may produce "gross autobiographic memory gaps that may be disconcerting to a patient and a patient's family, because the patient's sense of continuity with his or her own past may be disrupted," the investigators say.

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D Whitehouse, et al. *J Clin Psychiatry*

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