

# The Little-Known Sordid History of Psychiatry

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#) ✓ Fact Checked

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Dr. Peter Breggin, a psychiatrist, is frequently referred to as “the conscience of psychiatry” because he's been able to successfully reform the psychiatric profession, abolishing lobotomies and other experimental psychosurgeries
- › Breggin refers to lobotomies as a rape of the soul, the permanent mutilation of an individual's selfhood, as damage to one area of the brain will harm the integration of the whole brain
- › Breggin also had a hand in getting the word out about the dangers of Prozac
- › Psychiatric drugs only stifle the brain function of patients. While they might ease some of the suffering, that relief comes at the expense of brain damage
- › One psychiatric treatment Breggin has not been able to eliminate is electroshock treatment, which is actually starting to be used more and more. Transcranial direct current stimulation and Neuralink, a transcranial implant designed by the Elon Musk Company, pose severe risks to your brain health and function

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Dr. Peter Breggin, a psychiatrist, has written more than a dozen bestselling books on psychiatry and the drug industry. He's frequently referred to as "the conscience of psychiatry" because he's been able to successfully reform the psychiatric profession,

abolishing one of the most harmful practices, namely lobotomies and other experimental psychosurgeries.

He was the first to take a public stand against lobotomies as a young man, and was able to change the field as a result. He's featured in Aaron and Melissa Dykes' excellent documentary, "The Minds of Men."<sup>1</sup>

Now 83 years old, Breggin has seen a lot, and in this interview, he shares his own evolution and experiences as a psychiatrist. His interest in psychiatry began at the age of 18, when he became a volunteer at a local state mental hospital.

*"It was a nightmare," he says. "It was like my uncle Dutch's descriptions of liberating a Nazi concentration camp. The place stank. People were sitting in these bare, barren concrete corridors.*

*They had a TV set that wasn't working ... and bolted down tables and chairs so the people couldn't throw them at each other. No attention being given to them at all. Often just sitting there; some hallucinating, and somebody told me that the girl in the corner coiled up in a ball on the floor by a radiator had been a Radcliffe student ...*

*The doctors were callous, the aids were callous, there was just no love in the place at all. I could tell, even though I didn't really have much experience growing up with love, I could feel that what was missing was love, care, nurturing. It was so clear."*

## **Toxic Psychiatry**

Breggin eventually became the leader of that volunteer program. He and 200 other students painted the walls and took patients for walks. He asked the superintendent to assign one patient per volunteer aid, to build real relationships. The superintendent balked at the idea, but eventually gave in. Breggin tells this story in his book, "Toxic Psychiatry."<sup>2</sup>

*"We ended up getting almost every patient out of that hospital," he says. "We got them placed in different places that were much better. We got some back with their families. It was so clear to me that this was the way to go ...*

*I watched electroshock and insulin coma shock where people would come in and they'd give them overdoses of insulin to send them into coma. They'd be frothing at the mouth, unconscious, having seizures and getting ready to die, literally. Then they would give them orange juice or sugar water and they would become alert again.*

*It was so clear to me what was going on. People would come in full of energy – angry, depressed, anxious and often resistant ... They'd get this injection of insulin to knock them out, killing them, basically, but when they came awake they were like puppies. They were grateful, they said 'Thank you, I feel like you saved me.' They'd be docile ... There's no fooling about what this was. I knew exactly what it was.*

*I knew what shock treatment was ... I've been fighting this, but we're still doing it ... It's when they put electrodes on the forehead of the brain ... You get a shock of a voltage ... 10 times what you need to give convulsions ... and it makes docility. It makes people out of touch with themselves. It makes people unable to complain ... [Elevated mood] is the artificial euphoria [caused by] brain damage. This is very brain damaging."*

All of this is what motivated Breggin to go into psychiatry, in order to help reform the profession from the inside. Interestingly, as early as 1963, Jerry Klerman, who later became the highest-ranking psychiatrist in the federal government and a professor at Harvard, told Breggin there was no future in helping people strengthen their mental resilience.

The future, Klerman told him, was in drugs, and using computers to decide which drugs to use. After his first year at Harvard medical school, Breggin left and went back to the Upstate Medical Center (University) in New York, where he had already done internship.

*"Then I went on to the National Institute of Mental Health ... for two years. There I saw clearly what was happening. Psychiatry was leaving the psychosocial model behind.*

*My volunteer program had already been described by the last big Federal Commission on Mental Health. It's mentioned two or three times and described as one of the solutions to the vast mental hospital problems ... Nothing about drugs, drugging and shocking people in it.*

*It was much more real, much more about what was really going on with human beings and human sufferings, spiritual, psychological. I could just see this writing on the wall and I was not sure what to do. I was invited to stay at the National Institute of Mental Health.*

*I accepted briefly, in the child division. I was very interested in helping children. Then I thought, I can't do this. I gave them warning without even having a job that I was leaving. I didn't know what else to do, so I went into private practice."*

## **Breggin Spearheaded Drug-Free Psychiatry**

Breggin focused on helping people without medication. "I learned very quickly that the most disturbed people would calm down and relate when somebody cared about them, wasn't afraid of them, was interested in them and made no pretense of being superior to them," he says. Drugs, he explains, were simply stifling the patients. While they might ease some of the suffering, that relief came at the expense of brain damage.

Breggin goes on to tell the story of how he prevented the return of lobotomies and psychosurgeries — strategies in which the brain is purposely damaged through electric shocks, radium chip implants or puncturing the prefrontal area of the brain with an ice pick inserted next to the eyeball, for example.

Breggin refers to lobotomies as a rape of the soul, the permanent mutilation of an individual's selfhood, as damage to one area of the brain will harm the integration of the whole brain. As noted by Breggin, you cannot "plop out aggression" like a pit out of an

olive. The brain doesn't work like that. It's an integrated organ and mental processes arise from integrated processes involving many different areas of the brain.

**“ So many people now know that drugs are dangerous and shock treatment is horrible. But, the power of psychiatry grows and the drug companies grow ... and more and more people are being recruited by all the ads and all the fake science. ”**

He decided somebody had to stop the madness. And, while he received no support from any other well-known psychiatrist or professor, and came under vehement attack by the establishment, including threats of physical violence against himself and his family that at times necessitated the use of bodyguards.

Breggin eventually succeeded. It's a fascinating story, so I highly recommend listening to the whole interview. When asked why he took on this formidable fight, he says:

*"When I saw what was being done to people, I said 'Somebody has to do this. I have no choice about this.' I had no idea what I was up against. I had no idea that everywhere there would be enemies; that I'd be threatened with violence.*

*When I was invited to speak by Harvard Medical students, that people would rip down all the signs about the meeting; that there'd be blowback on the students and stuff like that. I had no idea what I was walking into."*

## **The Lawsuit That Ended Lobotomies**

The end of lobotomies was brought about by a lawsuit filed by a young lawyer named Gabe Kaimowitz on behalf of a chronically hospitalized patient who had been promised release from the mental hospital if he underwent experimental psychosurgery. Breggin tells the story:

*"[Kaimowitz] found out they were going to do a psychosurgery experimentation in the state hospital with a local university, Wayne's State. It was all set up to go. He intervened. In fact, the case is called by his name, which is unusual ... Kaimowitz v. The Department of Mental Health Wayne State University.*

*A three-judge panel met about the case. This [patient] had been interviewed by the Commissioner of Mental Health. He had been chronically hospitalized and then allegedly had sexually assaulted a nurse or something, but there was no record of it and certainly no adjudication about it; no meetings about it. He was a lifetime patient.*

*The Commissioner told him he could get out if he underwent the psychosurgery. Well, the judges looked over his case and decided that, first, he was going to be discharged because he was being held illegally. They discharged John Doe. Then the state said, 'Well, the case is over.' They said 'No. You guys have set up this whole thing. We're going to look at it.'*

*Well, I was the go-to person as ... [Kaimowitz] brought me in. I couldn't testify the first day because they were filibustering me. They wanted to force me to stay overnight so that ... they'd have the whole weekend to review the case with the surgeons. Follow me?*

*Of course, they're forcing me into testifying in the afternoon, filibustering in the morning. Gabe said, 'This is really too bad because now they're going to have the whole weekend to talk about your testimony with the surgeons.' I said, 'No, no, no. We'll filibuster back. I'll testify on something else for the afternoon.' He said, 'How are you going to do that?'*

*I said, 'Well, I'll talk about the history of psychiatry. I'm going to tie it into the extermination camps, which were very much modeled on state mental hospitals. Show the comparison and hopefully the judges will invoke the Nuremberg Code, which says that, of course, that man couldn't volunteer in a state mental hospital because he's in a total institution, just like the Nuremberg Code was applied to.'*

*He said, 'OK.' I gave him a few questions and we went that afternoon and did that. Then on the following Monday, I started to talk about psychosurgery. They were so unprepared that all they could do was go through this 100-page paper that I had written ...*

*We won the trial and it stopped, on the spot, all psychosurgery in the state hospitals in the federal programs. NIH stopped; VA stopped and all the state hospitals stopped. This was 1972-1973."*

It's important to realize just how important this was, to put a stop to the return of lobotomies and experimental psychosurgeries. It was widely accepted as a practical solution for all sorts of problems, including race riots and behavioral problems among young children.

The beginning of the end of psychosurgery was the early 1970s. At that time, Breggin, who for most of his career struggled to get support, got the support of the Congressional Black Caucus, who could see the social consequences of psychosurgery being used on black children, as well as certain conservative Senators who thought it was immoral.

*"I was the first person to criticize lobotomies in public, let alone the first psychiatrist. It was crazy. I still don't understand human beings. I work hard about it, but I keep falling short. I couldn't believe that I was so alone doing this," he says.*

## **The Dangers of Speaking Out Against Prozac**

Breggin also had a hand in getting the word out about the dangers of Prozac. In his 1991 book, "Toxic Psychiatry," he briefly mentioned Prozac is likely to do a lot of harm, and that there were already reports of the drug causing violent aggression.

He was later asked to be the sole scientific expert to put together the science for several dozen lawsuits against Eli Lilly, in which patients or their families claimed the drug had caused violent episodes, suicide, homicide, mania or psychosis. The drama and intrigue

surrounding this trial rivals any good spy novel, so for more details, listen to the interview.

As just one example, at the time of his deposition against Eli Lilly, he, his wife and daughter all developed severe illness. By chance, a plumber they'd called in to fix a problem in the basement discovered the stovepipe for the gas heater had been disconnected and was laying out of sight, as if purposely hidden, pumping gas into the house.

Before that, the family had received death threats, and Breggin had called the FBI. Agents claiming to be FBI had visited his family, but something obviously wasn't right.

*"When I called the FBI back, they said they had no record of coming to see me," Breggin says. "It got very weird ... We were in this strange world. People would get angry at me in the audiences. By the way, that never happens, anymore ... I want people to know, the environment has changed completely.*

*So many people now know that drugs are dangerous and shock treatment is horrible. But, the power of psychiatry grows and the drug companies grow ... and more and more people are being recruited by all the ads and all the fake science. It is all fake science. You can look at any of my books. If you want it quicker, look up my YouTube channel."*

In broad strokes, the Eli Lilly trial turned out to be fixed in Eli Lilly's favor and Breggin was set up to fail in his investigation. The plaintiffs lost the case and Eli Lilly was cleared of charges. Eventually, however, evidence emerged showing Eli Lilly lawyers had bribed some of the plaintiffs and arranged for a secret settlement provided they lost the case.

A Supreme Court judge in Kentucky declared the trial a fraud and changed the verdict to "a secret settlement with prejudice." When the judge decided to disclose the amount of the secret settlement, he was removed and replaced with another judge who decided the settlement amount was not to be disclosed as it might hurt Eli Lilly. The full details of this remarkable case can be found in Breggin's book, "Medication Madness."<sup>3</sup>



## **Electroshock Treatment – A Real-World Conspiracy**

One psychiatric treatment Breggin has not been able to eliminate is electroshock treatment (ECT), which is actually starting to be used more and more. Breggin says:

*"I've worked on denting shock treatment. Then finally, a class action suit was brought against the manufacturers. They lost against the first manufacturer. There are only two [manufacturers] in North America, and I wasn't involved. Then they called me in. Of course, they expected, again, to just get it thrown out of court.*

*I did a scientific brief for the judge on brain damage from ECT. The judge decided that there was sufficient evidence for brain damage to make it a jury question. This was huge. The judge focused on the single most important thing he could.*

*The drug company, within days, settled and put out a statement to the FDA that ECT can cause brain damage and severe memory loss. All that's up on my website, and I've written blogs about it ... to show you the nature of what is definitely a conspiracy of people working together toward the same aim and being evil about it.*

*Within days, the FDA approved ECT for the first time for treatment-resistant depression, which means nothing. It's used more and more. It's not less. I don't think we slowed it down with this, but we made a big gain. We now have a record of a drug company admitting to the FDA it causes brain damage and so on.*

*Then the FDA with all its power comes right back and then approves ECT for the first time. They had never approved it. They tried to and there was so much opposition they didn't do it. Then when the drug companies got hurt, it was within days that they approved it. Wow."*

## On Neuralink and Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation

Breggin also discusses the hazards of transcranial direct current stimulation and Neuralink, a transcranial implant designed by the Elon Musk Company. Elon is probably doing this because he's concerned about the integration of artificial intelligence, which is coming.

He fears the human race could become subservient to artificial intelligence. He thinks one of the preservation strategies is to allow us to sort of keep pace with these advances. Breggin comments:

*"This is the new cutting edge that I'm trying to get across to people. I have a new show. If you go to my YouTube channel and look at [my interview with] the Dykes ... I did a show about this saying that this is worse than the psychiatry we have now. I'm focusing on all the electronics.*

*The FDA has approved electrodes on the heads of children to leave them on all night long to give them low voltage stimulation, which is going to go through the skin, back up the nerves, all the way to the frontal lobes in an entirely disruptive hammer-like, crushing way. It's going to blunt the kids. It's horrible. They studied it for four weeks and approved it, if you can imagine that.*

*It's low voltage, but we know it disrupts brain waves. It's bizarre that they approved this. I started to take this on and then, or actually through Aaron and Melissa, I found out about what was being done by Elon Musk. What's interesting to me is that while Musk is so brilliant, he's stupid about the brain. That's probably because the neurosurgeons and psychiatrists he consults are stupid about the brain.*

*I mean they're just stupid. He wants to put in multiple threadlike electrodes into the brain, into webs of neurons, and put in low voltage stimulation. This is insane. The brain can't tolerate this. He hopes to [be able to] communicate but there's not going to be any communication.*

*The brain isn't going to talk to these electrodes. That's not how the brain works. The brain talks to itself. It's not going to talk to Elon Musk [or anyone else] and he's going to disrupt the brain talking to itself. It's a terrible thing to do.*

*I wish somebody who knows Elon Musk would say, 'You ought to talk to Peter Breggin. He says your consultants are stupid.' He's already planning to try to get FDA approval for some neurological disorders and that'll be the beginning of the onslaught.*

*Here's the really deadly part – a part to really think about and close with – and that is that the defense department, DARPA, is funding Musk.*

*The Dykes found out that the machine is going to be used to sew in these electrodes ... through the funding of DARPA and work through UCLA, which has always been murderers of the brain. We shut down programs at UCLA going way back. We shut down a lot of different kinds of programs in my anti-psycho­surgery campaign."*

## Sources and References

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- [1 The Minds of Men](#)
- [2,3 Psychiatric Drug Facts](#)