



Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill

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By Steven H Propp August 7, 2013 Robert Whitaker is an American journalist and author, who has also written such books as *Psychiatric Drugs*, and *the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America*, *The Mapmaker's Wife: A True Tale of Love, Murder, and Survival in the Amazon*, etc. In the Preface to this 2002 book, "We, as a society, are estranged from the 'mad' in our midst. We fear them and their illness. We read of occasional acts of violence committed by those said to be schizophrenic, and we respond by setting up programs that focus on keeping them medicated. But is that the best response? If the medications work so well, then why do 'schizophrenics' fare so poorly in the United States? The search to understand this therapeutic failure necessarily takes one deep into history... a history of mad medicine reveals very little about what it is like to be 'crazy' or 'insane'... However, it does reveal a great deal about the society that would 'cure' these patients... mad medicine does provide a prism through which to view a society, and that is why the poor outcomes for those diagnosed with schizophrenia raise questions, I would think, for all of us." He notes, "Historian Joel Braslow, in his review of California patient records, found that only 22 percent of [electro]shocked patients had agreed to the treatment, and this was so even though physicians regularly told their hospitalized patients that electroshock was safe and painless... in the United States, forced electroshock remained a common practice for more than two decades, with easily more than 1 million Americans subjected to it... electroshock was also used to frighten, control, and punish patients... Many hospitals used electroshock to quiet the wards and set up schedules for mass shocking of their patients... Head trauma, if truth be told, had replaced the whip for controlling the mentally ill." (Pg. 104-106) (Amazon customer review)

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