Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) Authorization for Procedure:
Continuation/Maintenance Treatment

I, __________________________________, hereby authorize Dr. _______________________________________
and any associates or assistants the doctor deems appropriate, to perform Electroconvulsive Therapy.

My doctor has recommended that I receive continuation or maintenance treatment with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). This treatment, including the risks and benefits that I may experience, has been fully described to me. I give my consent to be treated with continuation ECT.

I will receive ECT to prevent relapse of my illness. Whether ECT or an alternative treatment, like medication or psychotherapy, is most appropriate for me at this time depends on my prior experience with these treatments in preventing the return of symptoms, the features of my illness and other considerations. Why continuation/maintenance ECT has been recommended for me has been explained.

Continuation/maintenance ECT involves a series of treatments with each usually separated in time by one or more weeks. Continuation/maintenance ECT is usually given for a period of several months or longer. These treatments may be given on an inpatient or outpatient basis.

To receive each continuation/maintenance treatment I will come to a specially equipped area in this facility. The treatments are usually given in the morning. Because the treatments involve general anesthesia, I will have had nothing to eat or drink for several hours before each treatment. Before the treatment, a small needle will be placed in my vein so that I can be given medications. An anesthetic medication will be injected that will quickly put me to sleep. I will then be given another medication that will relax my muscles. Because I will be asleep, I will not experience pain or discomfort or remember the procedure. Other medications may also be given depending on my needs.

To prepare for the treatment, monitoring sensors will be placed on my head and body. Blood pressure cuffs will be placed on an arm. This monitoring involves no pain or discomfort. After I am asleep, a carefully controlled amount of electricity will be passed between two electrodes that have been placed on my head.

I may receive bilateral ECT or unilateral ECT. In bilateral ECT, one electrode is placed on the left side of the head, the other on the right side. In unilateral ECT, one electrode is placed on usually the right side. Right unilateral ECT is likely to produce less memory difficulty than bilateral ECT. However, for some patients bilateral ECT may be a more effective treatment. My doctor will carefully consider the choice of unilateral or bilateral ECT.

The electrical current produces a seizure in the brain. The amount of electricity used to produce the seizure will be adjusted to my individual needs, based on the judgment of the ECT physician. The medication used to relax my muscles will greatly soften the contractions in my body that would ordinarily accompany the seizure. I will be given oxygen to breathe. Usually, the seizure will last less than one minute. During the procedure, my heart, blood pressure and brain waves will be monitored. Within a few minutes, the anesthetic medications will wear off and I will awaken. I will then be observed until it is time to leave the ECT area.

The number of continuation/maintenance treatments that I will receive will depend on my clinical course. Continuation ECT is usually given for at least six months. If it is felt that continuation ECT is helpful and should be used for a longer period (maintenance ECT), I will be asked to consent to the procedure again.

ECT is expected to prevent the return of my psychiatric condition. While for most patients ECT is effective in this way, I understand that this cannot be guaranteed. With continuation/maintenance ECT I may remain considerably improved or I may have a partial or complete return of psychiatric symptoms.

Like other medical treatments, ECT has risks and side effects. To reduce the risk of complications, I will receive a medical evaluation before starting ECT. The medications I have been taking may be adjusted. However, in spite of precautions, it is possible that I will experience a medical complication. As with any procedure using general anesthesia, there is a remote possibility of death from ECT. The risk of death from ECT is very low, about one in 10,000 patients. This rate may be higher in patients with severe medical conditions.
ECT very rarely results in serious medical complications, such as heart attack, stroke, respiratory difficulty, or continuous seizure. More often, ECT results in irregularities in heart rate and rhythm. These irregularities are usually mild and short lasting, but in some instances can be life threatening. With modern ECT technique, dental complications are infrequent and bone fractures or dislocations are very rare. If serious side effects occur, the necessary medical care will be provided.

The minor side effects that are frequent include headache, muscle soreness, and nausea. These side effects usually respond to simple treatment. When I awaken after each treatment, I may be confused. This confusion usually goes away within an hour.

I understand that memory loss is a common side effect of ECT. The memory loss with ECT has a characteristic pattern, including problems remembering past events and new information. The degree of memory problems is often related to the number and type of treatments given. A smaller number of treatments is likely to produce less memory difficulty than a larger number. Shortly following a treatment, the problems with memory are greatest. As time from treatment increases, memory improves.

I may experience difficulties remembering events that happened before and while I received ECT. The spottiness in my memory for past events may extend back to several months before I received ECT, and, less commonly, for longer periods of time, sometimes several years or more. While many of these memories should return during the first few months following continuation ECT, I may be left with some permanent gaps in memory.

For a short period following each treatment, I may also experience difficulty in remembering new information. This difficulty in forming new memories should be temporary and will most likely disappear following completion of continuation/maintenance ECT.

The effects of continuation/maintenance ECT on memory are likely to be less pronounced than those during an acute ECT course. By spreading treatments out in time, with an interval of a week or more between treatments, there should be substantial recovery of memory between each treatment.

Because of the possible problems with confusion and memory, it is important that I not drive or make any important personal or business decisions the day that I receive a continuation/maintenance treatment. Limitations on my activities may be longer depending on the side effects I experience following each treatment, and will be discussed with my doctor.

By signing below, I certify that I have had an opportunity to ask the doctor all my questions concerning anticipated benefits, material risks, alternative therapies and risks of those alternatives, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

My decision to agree to continuation/maintenance ECT is being made voluntarily, and I may withdraw my consent for future treatment at any time.

I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____________________________                         __________            ________
Patient’s Initials or Authorized Representative   Date                    Time

_____________________________
Witness

Certification of Physician: I certify that I have discussed and explained the procedure described in this consent form with the individual granting consent.

_____________________________
Signature of Physician

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