

Ugo Cerletti Encyclopedia Article

Ugo Cerletti

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Ugo Cerletti

1877-1963

Italian psychiatrist and neurologist who developed the method of electroconvulsive shock (electroshock) therapy (ECT) to treat certain mental pathologies. While chair of the Department of Mental and Neurological Diseases at the University of Rome, Cerletti began to use electroshock on animals while studying the neuropathological effects of recurrent epilepsy attacks. He first used ECT on a human patient with schizophrenia in 1938. Through experimentation, Cerletti and colleagues found ECT to be useful in treating some forms of schizophrenia, manic depression, and severe depression, and ECT quickly became a popular therapeutic tool.