

Treatment of refractory depression

Options explicitly not considered by Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines (14th edition) in Psychiatry, compared to ECT.

Treatment	Advantages	Disadvantages	Refs
ECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well established Effective Well supported in the literature Speed of response, eg high suicidality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor reputation in public domain Necessitates general anaesthetic Needs specialist referral Relative contraindications if physical comorbidity eg recent MI, arrhythmias, cerebral aneurysm Usually combined with other treatments Cognitive problems, particularly retrograde amnesia Maintenance requirements Mortality rate 1:50,000 	1-5
Psychological approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well established Effective Well supported by the literature No medication Outpatient procedure No side effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural/language barriers Some patients too ill to engage Substantial time commitment Stigma around seeking therapy Waiting lists Lack of immediate results Potential for negative emotional experiences 	6-10
rTMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective Well supported by the literature No medication Outpatient procedure Minimal side effects Safe with physical comorbidities and pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time requirement Maintenance requirements Limited availability 	11-17
Vagus Nerve Stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surgical procedure Used as adjunct to TAU Slow onset of effect Limited evidence Side effects Expensive 	18-20
Deep brain stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicable to very severe depression Adjustable stimulation levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surgical procedure Maintenance requirements Side effects Not part of NICE depression pathway Expensive 	21-24
Psychosurgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicable to very severe depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surgical procedure Potential for irreversible changes to cognitive function, personality, behaviour and emotional experiences Lack of evidence Not part of NICE depression pathway Expensive 	25-27

References

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