

NICE Guidance on Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation for Severe Depression

In November 2007 the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence issued Guidance on transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) for severe depressive illness ([link](#)). This was issued as part of the Institute's programme for the assessment of interventional procedures, which advises the NHS on when and how new surgical procedures can be used in clinical practice.

The conclusions of the Guidance were that current evidence suggested that there were no major safety concerns associated with TMS for severe depression, but there was uncertainty about the procedure's clinical efficacy.

The efficacy of TMS may depend on several factors, including the intensity, frequency, site and duration of treatment. NICE did not recommend TMS for clinical practice, but advised that it be performed only in research studies designed to investigate these factors.

The Committee endorses this Guidance.

The Committee also believes the Guidance on TMS is relevant to novel surgical treatments for mood disorders, for example, vagal nerve stimulation (VNS) and deep brain stimulation (DBS).

The Committee therefore recommends that TMS, VNS and DBS should be performed only as part of research studies that have gained formal ethical approval from the relevant organization.

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