

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

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