Overview

Historical context
What to expect with ECT
Common questions

History

First application of ECT in 1938
Homeless man with catatonic schizophrenia
Patient started talking, sustained benefit

History

Introduced to the United States in 1940
All initial therapies were without anesthesia or paralysis
1952 Succinylcholine introduced as a muscle relaxant with ECT

History

Rapid decline in 1950s with the development of psychotropic medications
Negative perception of ECT in popular culture
History
Today ECT remains an important somatic treatment for mood and psychotic disorders

Indications
Treatment refractory depression and psychosis
Severe or life-threatening psychiatric illness

Indications
Depression
- Unipolar or bipolar
- Prior treatment failures
- Acute severity (psychosis, suicidality, inability to care for self)

Indications
Catatonia
- Failure of other treatment options
- Court order

Indications (less common)
Psychosis
Mania
Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome

What to Expect
ECT is typically performed in a hospital, under the supervision of a psychiatrist and an anesthesiologist.

**Typical ECT Treatment**

Seizure duration between 15 seconds to 1-2 minutes

Monitor motor and EEG duration

**Typical ECT Course**

6-12 Treatments

2-3 Treatments per week

Treat until improvement plateaus

- No further improvement after two treatments

**Risks/Side Effects**

- Common: transient confusion, headache, nausea, myalgia, retrograde and anterograde amnesia
- Uncommon: cardiac arrest, unstable arrhythmias, ischemia, severe hypertension or hypotension, stroke, prolonged apnea, aspiration, laryngospasm, prolonged seizures, fractures, malignant hyperthermia
Common questions

Does ECT cause brain damage?

Is ECT painful?

Will I be conscious during my treatment?

How will I feel after the treatment?

My tongue is bleeding..what happened?
Why is there “gel” in my hair after the procedure?

My doctor told me I didn’t have a seizure, or my seizure was too short. What does this mean?

Can I return home by myself after a treatment?

Why are my treatments every other day (or two times per week) and not daily?

When should I call the doctor?

How long will it take to feel better?