

Electroconvulsive therapy found to reduce severity of certain mental illnesses

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Researchers have found that electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), where an

electric current is passed through the brain, can reduce the severity of mental illnesses. The findings were presented at [EPA 2024](#).

ECT is a safe and effective [treatment](#) for some mental illnesses including severe/psychotic depression, postnatal psychosis and mania. Patients are placed under general anesthetic and the brain is stimulated with short electric pulses. This causes a brief seizure which lasts for less than two minutes.

The use of ECT across Scotland was assessed over an 11-year period from 2009 to 2019 using data from the Scottish Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) Audit Network (SEAN). The Scotland-wide naturalistic study assessed the efficacy and side effects of ECT across a range of common mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar [depression](#), schizophrenia, and mania.

Key findings from the study include:

- ECT was shown to be effective in reducing illness severity, as measured by Clinical Global Impression Scale (CGI-S). CGI-S is a validated clinician administered assessment tool which measures illness severity.
- 2,920 ECT episodes had CGI-S scores recorded for patients before and after treatment. The mean CGI-S score prior to treatment indicated marked illness severity (5.03 95% CI 4.99–5.07), while after treatment, the mean CGI-S score was reduced to 2.07, (95% CI 2.03–2.11) indicating a reduction to borderline illness severity.
- The study also assessed side effects of ECT. Anesthetic complications and prolonged seizures were rare, occurring in

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