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Transcranial magnetic stimulation for geriatric depression: Promises and pitfalls

Priyadharshini Sabesan, Sudheer Lankappa, Najat Khalifa, Vasudevan Krishnan, Rahul Gandhi, Lena Palaniyappan

Abstract

As the global population gets older, depression in the elderly is emerging as an important health issue. A major challenge in treating geriatric depression is the lack of robust efficacy for many treatments that are of significant benefit to depressed working age adults. ¹⁹ Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS) is a novel physical treatment approach used mostly in working age adults with depression. Many TMS trials and clinics continue to exclude the elderly from treatment citing lack of evidence in this age group. In this review, we appraise the ⁵ evidence regarding the safety and efficacy of rTMS in the elderly. A consistent observation supporting a high degree of tolerability and safety among the elderly patients emerged across the RCTs and the uncontrolled trials. Further, there is no reliable evidence negating the utility of rTMS in the elderly with depression. We also identified several factors other than age that moderate the observed variations in the efficacy of rTMS in the elderly. These factors include but not limited to (1) brain atrophy (2)

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