

TREATMENT APPROACHES

Ontario Shores offer innovative, safe, and high-quality care in mental health while supporting our service users in achieving their personal recovery goals. Our model of care is patient- and recovery-focused and considers all aspects of wellbeing. We offer many different treatment options to encompass the wide range of complex mental health conditions that we encounter and strive to deliver them to the highest standards.

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY (ECT)

What is Electro-Convulsive Therapy?

ECT is an extremely safe and effective medical treatment for certain psychiatric disorders. It involves a small amount of electricity being applied to the scalp, producing a seizure in the brain. This procedure is painless as the patient is asleep under general anesthesia and greatly reduces a patient's symptoms.

Who is treated with ECT?

ECT is most commonly given to patients with severe depressive illness, mania or some forms of schizophrenia who have not responded to other treatments or who cannot receive other treatments for medical reasons.

How is ECT administered?

A treatment team consisting of a psychiatrist, an anesthesiologist and nurses perform the procedure. First, the patient's medical condition is carefully examined; this includes review of the patient's complete medical history, a physical examination, and additional medical testing. The treatments are given on a regular basis. Prior to each treatment, the patient should not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before.

When the patient enters the treatment room, an intravenous (IV) line is started. Sensors for recording EEG are placed on the head. Other sensors are placed on the chest for monitoring ECG, and a cuff is placed around an arm for monitoring the patient's blood pressure. Then, an anesthetic medication is injected through the IV line which causes the patient to sleep for 5 to 10 minutes. After that, succinylcholine, a muscle relaxant, is injected, preventing movement during the treatment, which could harm the patient.

A brief electrical charge is applied to the electrodes on the scalp which stimulates the brain and produces the seizure that lasts about one minute. Throughout the procedure, the patient receives oxygen through a mask until they resume breathing on their own. When the treatment is complete, the patient is taken to a recovery area for monitoring. The patient can typically leave the recovery area within 30 to 60 minutes.

How many treatments are given?

ECT is given as a course of treatments; the total number needed to successfully treat a patient's condition varies from person to person, however, the typical range is up to 12 treatments.

Is ECT curative?

ECT is very effective in providing relief from psychiatric symptoms. However, permanent cures for psychiatric illness are rare, regardless of the treatment method. To prevent relapse following ECT, patients typically require further treatments. If the procedure is used to protect the patient against relapse, it is usually administered to outpatients on a weekly or monthly basis.

Is ECT safe?

ECT is considered to be a very safe procedure and does often cause complications in patients with no other health conditions. Although there is a negative connotation associated with ECT, modern medicine has made the process more comfortable and tolerable for patients. Like any other medical intervention, ECT can cause side effects which include:

- ◆ Confusion, mostly due to the anesthesia, which clears within an hour of the procedure
- ◆ Headaches, which can be relieved with acetaminophen
- ◆ Memory loss, which typically reverses following the completion of ECT and very rarely causes permanent or serious complications

Patients and/or their support person are always informed of the potential risks associated with a particular treatment, allowing them to make informed decisions.

REPETITIVE TRANSCRANIAL MAGNETIC STIMULATION (rTMS)

What is repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation?

rTMS consists of a series of short magnetic pulses directed to the brain to stimulate the nerve cells. This is done to stimulate the neurons in the areas affected by the illness and change the functioning of the brain circuits involved.

Who is treated with rTMS?

rTMS is offered for patients who have been diagnosed with treatment resistant depression and are unable to receive ECT but would benefit from a similar type of treatment.

How is rTMS administered and how does it work?

rTMS is a non-invasive treatment option during which an electromagnetic coil placed on the head delivers a series of short magnetic pulses directed at the part of the brain that serves to regulate emotions in order to stimulate nerve cells. The rapidly changing magnetic pulses cause neurons in the brain to change their firing pattern. By doing so, the dysfunctional brain patterns can change in the circuits involved in the disorder. These changes in brain activity are thought to be a mechanism through which treatment may occur. Many patients report significant improvement of their symptoms after 2 to 4 weeks of treatment.

A patient undergoing rTMS may participate in psychotherapy and/or use antidepressant drugs if directed to do so by a psychiatrist.

Treatment Length

Typical rTMS treatment consists of five daily treatments per week (Monday to Friday) for 4 to 6 weeks. Daily treatment usually lasts about 3 to 8 minutes.

Is it safe?

rTMS is considered to be a safe and well-tolerated treatment that can sometimes cause mild side effects that usually decrease as patients adjust. These include:

- ◆ Involuntary eye movement/contraction of facial muscles (these are not painful and will not continue following the procedure)
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Pain at the site of stimulation (can occur as people adjust to the sensation of the treatment)
- ◆ Mild headaches (only occur in ¼ of people, and typically go away within 24 hours or with administration of acetaminophen)

rTMS is not usually described as being painful; instead, it is often compared to a tapping sensation on the head. It may cause some discomfort as patients take time to adjust to the new sensation. The most serious concern with this method of treatment is the risk of a seizure, however this risk is extremely low. As with any other medical procedure, patients and/or their support person are informed of the common side effects and potential risks before they consent to treatment.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT)

What is CBT?

CBT could be described as a combination of behavioural therapy and psychotherapy. It is a short-term therapy that focuses on helping a patient achieve their goals by changing the thought patterns and behaviours that lead to the bigger problems in their lives.

Who is treated with CBT?

CBT is used to treat people who struggle with a variety of mental, emotional, and social health problems. This includes those who struggle with anger management issues, anxiety and panic disorders, depression, substance use disorders, eating disorders, and relationship problems.

How is it delivered?

CBT is often delivered on a one-on-one basis with a patient and a therapist who work together to identify the patient's goals and to change their problematic thought patterns or behaviours into healthy ones. Therapy sessions are very structured and usually involve "homework" for the patient in order to encourage them to use the skills they learn in therapy. CBT may also be delivered in a family- or group- based setting. It is often used in combination with medications to treat more severe illnesses.

Is it effective?

CBT is considered to be just as effective in the long term as some psychiatric drugs and short-term treatments because it equips patients with problem-solving and interpersonal skills that they can use in their daily lives. However, the effectiveness of this type of treatment does rely on a patient's willingness to work and change.

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (DBT)

What is DBT?

DBT is a type of CBT that was originally developed to treat borderline personality disorder. It is now more widely applied to assist individuals in learning skills to live a life worth living. DBT focusses on the psychosocial aspect of mental illness and recovery, providing patients with a support-oriented and collaborative form of cognitive therapy.

Who is treated with DBT?

Although it was originally developed to treat those struggling with borderline personality disorder, DBT is now recognized as an effective treatment for patients with mood disorders, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, self-injurious or suicidal ideation, and interpersonal problems.

How is it delivered?

DBT is delivered weekly with individual and/or group sessions in which the four “modules” of DBT are covered:

- ◆ Mindfulness helps patients observe, describe, and participate in their own lives non-judgmentally and effectively.
- ◆ Interpersonal effectiveness focuses on the development of skills to help form and strengthen healthy relationships with others.
- ◆ Distress tolerance focuses on accepting oneself and their current situation without judgement in order to better handle crisis situations.
- ◆ Emotional regulation helps patients to identify emotions and control negative emotional responses.

Like CBT, DBT can involve “homework” or personal practice for patients and can be combined with medications to maximize its effectiveness.

Is it effective?

DBT is often very effective in teaching patients healthy coping and interpersonal skills which greatly reduce the symptoms and negative effects of their illnesses. Like CBT, DBT does require a patient to be open to work towards changing their behaviours.

INTERPERSONAL THERAPY (IPT)

What is Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)?

IPT is a structured psychotherapy that focuses on addressing current issues with a person’s relationships and improving interpersonal skills.

Who is treated with IPT?

IPT can be used to treat people with a variety of mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, and eating disorders.

How is it delivered?

IPT is often delivered in a structured, time-limited manner as a one-on-one or group-based treatment. It addresses patients’ goals in respect to important, current relationships in their lives, their symptoms, and their need for social support. Many patients receive IPT in combination with medications to increase effectiveness of therapy.

Is it effective?

IPT can be as effective as other short-term treatments for mental health conditions because it provides patients with the support and skills they need to manage their symptoms in their daily lives. However, in therapy, patients are required to be willing to contribute and to change their behaviours in order to have a meaningful experience.