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## **SUMMARY OF COHERE RECOMMENDATION "Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) and transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) in the treatment of drug-resistant depression"**

This recommendation was adopted by the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) at its meeting of 12 June 2024.

According to the recommendation:

- a) Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) will be included in the range of public health services for treating drug-resistant depression in adults after the patient has first been treated with at least two appropriately administered pharmacotherapies that have failed to assist the patient or could not be justifiably applied for treating the patient.
- b) Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) will not be included in the range of public health services for treating drug-resistant depression in adults.

There is still insufficient research data on the effectiveness of rTMS and tDCS in treating drug-resistant depression in young adults or the elderly.

The recommendation applies to adult patients suffering from drug-resistant depression. Drug-resistant depression refers to conditions in which no clear treatment response based on clinical assessment has been obtained to two consecutive, appropriately administered pharmacotherapeutic trials, and the depression is characteristically moderate or severe. The recommendation is aimed at public healthcare service organisers who arrange the treatment of patients with drug-resistant depression.

Drug-resistant depression is a serious illness that affects the patient's quality of life in many ways, and significantly impairs functional capacity. It involves serious symptoms, of which the most important are a depressed mood, a deterioration of interest or in the experience of pleasure, and a loss of resources leading to a deterioration in working and functional capacity. The prevalence of drug-resistant depression is estimated at between 11 and 30 per cent of all

depression patients. This percentage suggests a conservative estimate of some 6,000-20,000 for the number of drug-resistant depression patients in specialised healthcare.

There is moderate research evidence for the effectiveness of repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS) in the treatment of drug-resistant depression in adults. The effectiveness of rTMS varies depending on the method of administration.

The clinical efficacy of transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) did not prove significantly greater than a placebo in the treatment of drug-resistant depression in adults. Studies were unable to demonstrate that any long-term effects could be achieved by this method.

Drug-resistant depression patients are not necessarily capable of lobbying for their own interests as a group. The service system must ensure that effective treatment is available for these patients according to their individual needs, and based on an individual treatment plan. The adequacy of resources must also be balanced against the provision of these methods.

No significant adverse reactions have been found in the use of rTMS or tDCS in adults or adolescents when safety recommendations are followed.

The treatment period costs of rTMS depend on such factors as the number of therapy sessions and the costs of the treatment unit. The treatment period cost for one patient is approximately EUR 3,500. This therapy is only cost-effective when the unit cost of treatment is less than EUR 100, which is not possible with current treatment practices, as the cost is at least 1.5 times this figure.

Aspects such as the information base for the recommendation and a description of the illness are shown in greater detail in the recommendation and its preparation memorandum (a separate document), together with a more detailed description of the methods covered by the recommendation and their efficacy.

### General information box in summaries

This is a summary of a recommendation adopted by the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland). The actual recommendation and related background material are available in Finnish on the COHERE Finland website under [Valmiit suositukset](#).

A summary of the recommendation is also available in [Swedish](#) and [English](#).

The Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland) is attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Its mission is to issue recommendations on services that should be included in the range of public health services. Further details of service choices in healthcare are available on [the COHERE Finland website](#).