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EFFECTS OF A MODIFIED RTMS STIMULATION PROTOCOL: CONTRASTING THE EFFICACY OF 800 AND 2000 DAILY PULSES

K. Richter, F. Scholz, J. Acker, G. Niklewski

Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Nuernberg, Germany

Objectives: The Clinic of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy of Nuremberg established rTMS as a standard tool in the treatment of patients with depressive disorder since 2001. The stimulation protocol was modified in October 2008 to match the current standard procedure reported in the literature. The pulse number was heightened from 800 to 2000 per proceeding. This study examines the effects of the modified stimulation protocol and contrasts the results with the former stimulation efficacy.

Methods: The authors compared patients suffering from depression, who were treated by rTMS with 800 pulses/day and with 2000 pulses/day. The results of psychological examinations (MADRS, HAMD, BDI, grading, cognitive screening) prior to and afterwards the three-weeks-rTMS-cycle were submitted. Variance analyses were used for statistical reason.

Results: The subsamples were comparable by sex, age, premorbid intellectual level as well as by self- and other-rated depression severity at treatment beginning. Statistical analyses showed a significant reduction of the depression symptoms in both stimulation protocol groups. Solely the HAMD score reduction in the 2000 pulse sample exceeded the decrease in the 800 pulse sample. Analogically the grading of human functions partly differed depending on the sample affiliation. Concerning the screening of cognitive functioning neither group was impaired.

Conclusions: rTMS still seems to be a well-functioning tool in the treatment of depressive disorders in the bounds of daily psychiatric health care. Although the modified stimulation protocol didn't show many advantages in respect to improving depression symptoms, the results indicate the continual adjustment of the stimulation parameter to meet the current standards.

Keywords: rTMS, depressive disorder, stimulation protocol