

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF NURSE COMPETENCE AND COMMUNICATION IN ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF CARE DURING ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY (ECT): A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) remains one of the most effective interventions for severe psychiatric disorders. However, despite its established clinical efficacy, ECT continues to be associated with stigma, fear, and misinformation, which significantly impacts patient satisfaction and adherence. Nursing care plays a critical role in shaping patients' perceptions and overall satisfaction with ECT. This literature review explores the influence of nursing education on patient satisfaction throughout the ECT process, highlighting how well-trained nurses contribute to improved communication, reduced anxiety, and enhanced patient-centered care. A systematic literature search was conducted using databases such as EBSCO, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, IEEE Access, and DOAJ, applying the PRISMA framework to identify, select, and analyze relevant studies. Articles published in English from 2019 to 2025. Findings demonstrate that structured nursing education programs focusing on procedural knowledge, therapeutic communication, and stigma reduction significantly enhance patient satisfaction across pre-treatment, intra-treatment, and post-treatment stages. Educated nurses are better equipped to deliver accurate information, address concerns, and foster trust, ultimately improving the overall patient experience. This review underscores the importance of integrating ECT-specific content into nursing curricula and ongoing professional development to ensure that psychiatric nursing practice aligns with evidence-based, patient-centered care principles.

Keywords: Nursing education; Electroconvulsive therapy; Patient satisfaction; Psychiatric care; Communication

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INTRODUCTION

Since its introduction in 1938, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) has been recognized as a highly effective intervention for the management of severe psychiatric disorders (Abdillah et al. 2024). Nevertheless, its clinical efficacy is overshadowed by persistent stigma, misconceptions, and negative public portrayals that fuel resistance among patients, families, and healthcare professionals (Nakayama et al. 2025). The fear associated with the term "shock therapy," amplified by media dramatization, often generates significant anxiety and hesitancy in patients recommended to undergo ECT (Ansari and Maiya 2025). This stigma not only discourages patients from accepting treatment but also influences healthcare

providers' attitudes, frequently resulting in the inadequate delivery of clear and reassuring information (Jelovac et al. 2025). Consequently, these factors collectively undermine both treatment adherence and patient satisfaction with ECT (Kafashan et al. 2025).

Patient satisfaction is widely acknowledged as a critical measure of healthcare quality, particularly in psychiatric care, where therapeutic communication and trust are paramount (Huoponen et al. 2025). In electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), satisfaction is influenced not only by treatment outcomes but also by the extent of pre-treatment education, emotional support, and the patient's involvement in decision-making (Azhari and Sukartini 2021). Research consistently demonstrates that providing comprehensive information before treatment and encouraging patients to voice their concerns can alleviate procedural anxiety and significantly improve satisfaction levels (Ansari and Maiya, 2025). Additionally, patients who feel informed and actively participate in treatment decisions report a more positive perception of care quality and overall satisfaction (Pettifor et al. 2025).

Despite these findings, gaps remain in the training of psychiatric nurses, leading to inconsistent communication and varied patient experiences during ECT (Nakayama et al. 2025). Insufficient ECT-specific education among nurses perpetuates uncertainty, inadvertently intensifying patient fears (Abdillah et al. 2024). Studies reveal that patients can perceive nurses' lack of confidence or unclear explanations, which further contributes to heightened anxiety and mistrust (Lonergan, Timmins, & Donohue, 2020). Conversely, nurses who undergo targeted ECT training not only enhance their technical proficiency but also communicate with greater empathy and clarity, thereby fostering improved patient experiences (Jelovac et al. 2025).

The historical progression of nursing roles in electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) demonstrates that nurses were traditionally confined to procedural tasks, including equipment preparation and sedation assistance (Huang et al. 2019). In contrast, contemporary models of patient-centered care highlight the critical function of nurses as both communicators and providers of emotional support, as well as educators throughout the ECT process (Current Nursing 2020). Evidence from recent research indicates that implementing structured educational programs for nursing staff enhances their knowledge base, builds confidence, and strengthens communication abilities, ultimately contributing to higher levels of patient satisfaction (Napierala et al. 2019). Collectively, these findings stress the necessity of closing educational gaps and empowering nurses to serve as informed, confident, and empathetic advocates for patients receiving ECT (Horínková, Bartecku, & Kališová, 2021).

The conceptual solution proposed in this study centers on developing and implementing structured educational programs for nurses that comprehensively cover the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of ECT care. This approach aims not only to enhance nurses' procedural knowledge but also to foster improved communication skills and greater sensitivity to patients' emotional needs. By equipping nurses with the tools to provide clear, accurate information and to proactively address patient concerns, these educational programs have the potential to reduce pre-treatment anxiety, improve treatment adherence, and enhance overall satisfaction with care (Du et al. 2024).

This study contributes to the existing body of evidence by demonstrating the direct impact of nurse education on patient satisfaction, highlighting the importance of embedding ECT-specific training into both pre-service and in-service nursing curricula. In doing so, it addresses a critical gap in psychiatric care, supporting the transition from technically focused nursing roles to holistic, patient-centered care models that prioritize therapeutic communication, patient empowerment, and collaborative decision-making (Jelovac et al. 2025). By fostering a more informed and empathetic nursing workforce, healthcare institutions can improve patient experiences, enhance treatment outcomes, and contribute to

the broader destigmatization of ECT within psychiatric practice (Tsai et al., 2021). This literature review aims to map current evidence regarding the role of nurse education in improving patient satisfaction during ECT, and to identify key recommendations for nursing practice and curriculum design.

METHODS

Study Design

This study employs a literature review methodology, which is a systematic process of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant research to answer specific research questions. The purpose of a literature review is to provide a comprehensive understanding of existing knowledge, highlight research gaps, and serve as a foundation for further investigation. Literature reviews are essential for mapping trends, comparing findings, and developing evidence-based recommendations.

There are several types of literature reviews, including narrative reviews, which provide a general overview of a topic; systematic reviews, which follow structured protocols to minimize bias; scoping reviews, which map the breadth and depth of available evidence; and meta-analyses, which statistically combine results from multiple studies. This study specifically adopts a scoping review approach to explore how nursing education influences patient satisfaction in the context of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), capturing both qualitative and quantitative studies. The reason for using a scoping review lies in its suitability for identifying key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in the literature, especially when the topic is complex or underexplored. This method allows for a broad synthesis, accommodating various study designs and methodologies.

Setting

The literature collection process involved systematic searches using EBSCO, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, IEEE Access, and DOAJ, ensuring access to reputable, peer-reviewed publications. Keywords included "nursing education," "patient satisfaction," "electroconvulsive therapy," "mental health nursing," and "communication." The author selected articles using the specified keywords and selected articles published in English from 2019 to 2025. 230 articles were obtained, and then 130 articles were excluded that were not suitable. Of the 100 complete articles, 80 were excluded because discrepancies were found in the information. So 20 articles were analyzed.

Research Subject

The subjects of this study, which employs a literature review methodology, consist of scholarly articles, peer-reviewed journals, and academic publications that address the relationship between nursing education and patient satisfaction in the context of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). These sources were selected from reputable databases, including EBSCO, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, IEEE Access, and DOAJ, to ensure the inclusion of high-quality and credible evidence.

The selection criteria focused on studies published within the last twenty years to capture recent developments in nursing education, patient-centered care, and psychiatric nursing practice related to ECT. Eligible articles specifically examined the role of nursing knowledge, communication practices, and patient education in influencing patient satisfaction and anxiety during ECT procedures. Studies that did not involve nursing education or patient experiences, such as those exclusively addressing pharmacological aspects of ECT, were excluded.

The collected literature represents a diverse body of evidence, highlighting the impact of structured nursing education on patient outcomes in psychiatric care. By synthesizing

findings from these scholarly works, the study aims to provide a cohesive understanding of how nursing competence and communication contribute to improved patient satisfaction and reduced stigma in ECT settings.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted using the PRISMA-ScR framework, which consists of six stages: (1) defining the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) selecting studies based on inclusion/exclusion criteria, (4) mapping data into thematic categories, (5) synthesizing and reporting findings, and (6) consulting with experts to validate interpretation and ensure analytical rigor. This comprehensive and transparent process enhances the reliability and validity of the review findings (Fig.1).

RESULTS

After searching with search engines such as EBSCO, DOAL, IEEE, and Science Direct, 20 articles were obtained that were suitable for analysis. The search results in the literature review showed that most of the articles discussed the benefits of ECT in patients.

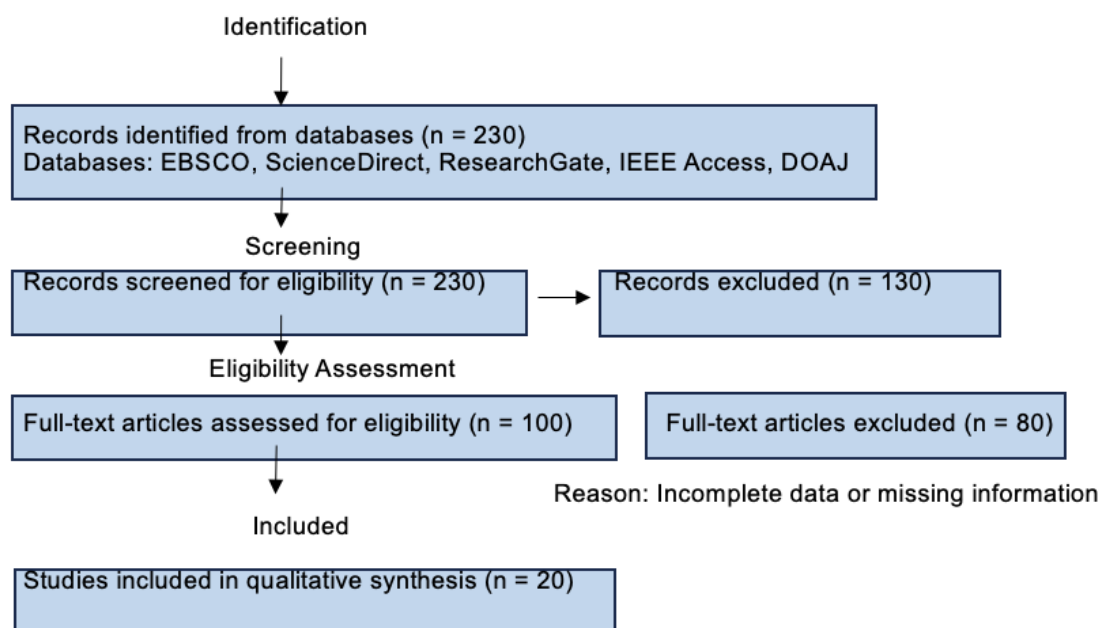


Figure 1. Flow chart of the Literature Review process

Table 1. Characteristics of articles examined

| No | Author(s), Year | Title | Journal | Methodology | Key Findings |
|----|---------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| 1 | Durmaz et al., 2023 | The Effect of Nursing Education on Patient Satisfaction in Electroconvulsive Treatment | International Journal of Caring Sciences.Vol.16,No.3 https://internationaljournalofcaringosciences.org/docs/27.durmaz1.pdf | Quasi-experimental cross-sectional study | Nursing education about ECT care significantly improved patient satisfaction before, during, and after treatment. Patients with trained nurses reported higher satisfaction and reduced anxiety. |
| 2 | Petrides et al., 2025 | The ECT-AD trial for severe treatment-refractory agitation and aggression in advanced dementia: Scientific rationale and study design. | Brain Stimulation, 18(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.brs.2024.12.332 | Pre-post intervention study | This article discusses a clinical trial designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) in managing severe agitation and aggression that are unresponsive to treatment in patients with advanced-stage dementia. Individuals with advanced dementia frequently experience intense agitation and aggression, which significantly impact the quality of life for both patients and their caregivers. Conventional approaches, such as psychotropic medications and behavioral interventions, are often ineffective in these cases. ECT is being considered as an alternative therapeutic option for this treatment-resistant population. Preliminary results from 18 patients suggest that ECT may be effective in alleviating these severe behavioral symptoms. |
| 3 | Obbels, J. et al., 2020 | Understanding Electroconvulsive Therapy-Related Anxiety: A Prospective Study | Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica.Vol.142,No.2. https://doi.org/10.1111/acps.13198 . | Prospective cohort study | Proper communication from nurses reduced anxiety and misconceptions, improving patient cooperation and satisfaction. |
| 4 | Nakamaya et al., 2025 | Differential Effects of Electroconvulsive Therapy on Patients with Schizophrenia Versus Depressive Disorder: Clinical Distinction Between Antipsychotic and Antidepressant Effects of Electroconvulsive Therapy | <i>Brain Sciences</i> 15(2):1–14. https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci15020126 . | Comparative study | Nurses play a strategic role in optimizing the outcomes of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) through comprehensive symptom monitoring, patient education, and the provision of emotional support. Enhancing nurses' knowledge of ECT mechanisms, including the relevance of biomarkers such as brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), enables the delivery of accurate information, reduces patient anxiety, and promotes both adherence to treatment protocols and overall patient satisfaction with the therapeutic process. |
| 5 | Lonergan, A. et al., 2020 | Mental Health Nurse Experiences of Delivering Care to Severely Depressed Adults Receiving Electroconvulsive Therapy | Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 28 (3), 309-316. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12692 . | Qualitative study | Nurse training improved confidence and reduced patient anxiety through clear communication. |
| 6 | Abdillah et al., 2024 | Knowledge and Attitudes towards Electroconvulsive Therapy for Psychiatric Conditions in a Single-Center Jordanian Hospital: A Cross-Sectional Study | Middle East Current Psychiatry 31(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s43045-024-00484-9 | Cross-sectional study | This study revealed that public knowledge about ECT was only moderate (45.1%), while positive attitudes were notably low (27.3%) and stigma toward mental illness remained significant. The lack of accurate information, reliance on social media as the primary source, and perceptions of ECT as inhumane contribute to its poor acceptance. Nurses play a pivotal role in educating patients, providing accurate information, and reducing stigma, thereby enhancing |

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| | | | | | adherence and improving the therapeutic outcomes of ECT. |
| 7 | Zang et al., 2025 | Effects of Binaural Beat Music and Esketamine for ECT in the Treatment of Major Depressive Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial Protocol | Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment Volume 21(June):1249–60. https://doi.org/10.2147/ndt.s514640 | Randomized Controlled Trial/RCT | This article presents an evaluating the effects of binaural beat music (BBM) and esketamine in electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) for major depressive disorder (MDD). The study aims to determine the potential of BBM to enhance treatment response, reduce adverse effects, and improve cognitive function. Nurses play a strategic role in implementing BBM interventions, monitoring patient responses, and providing education to improve comfort, adherence, and the overall success of ECT. |
| 8 | Birkenhager and Dierme, 2020 | Electroconvulsive Therapy: We Are Hesitant to Use the Most Effective Treatment for Severe Depression | <i>Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica</i> 141(4):301–3. https://doi.org/10.1111/acps.13171 . | Mixed-method (register & survey) | Higher satisfaction in hospitals with trained ECT nurses who provided better communication and emotional support. |
| 9 | Sweetmore, 2022 | What Are the Ethical Dilemmas in the Decision-Making Processes of Nursing People given Electroconvulsive Therapy? A Critical Realist Review of Qualitative Evidence | <i>Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing</i> 29(2):204–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12778 . | Qualitative study | Better pre-ECT information by trained nurses improved satisfaction among patients and families. |
| 10 | Kafashan, 2025 | Investigating the Impact of Electroconvulsive Therapy on Brain Networks and Sleep: An Observational Study Protocol | <i>BMJ Open</i> 15(3). https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2025-098859 | A prospective longitudinal observational design (DNS-ECT) | The effects of ECT on large-scale brain networks and sleep activity using EEG. The key findings indicate that alterations in brain functional connectivity and the enhancement of slow wave sleep may serve as biomarkers predicting both antidepressant efficacy and the risk of cognitive impairment. Nurses play a crucial role in monitoring sleep patterns, educating patients, and detecting early cognitive side effects to improve the quality of ECT services |
| 11 | Jelovac et al., 2025 | Retrograde Amnesia Following Electroconvulsive Therapy for Depression: Propensity Score Analysis | <i>BJPsych Open</i> 11(3):1–2. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2025.25 | Comparative study | This study employed a propensity score analysis to compare patients with depression who received either bitemporal or high-dose right unilateral ECT with depressed patients unexposed to ECT. The findings demonstrated that both ECT techniques resulted in significant reductions in autobiographical memory consistency immediately post-treatment, persisting up to three months, with a greater impact observed in bitemporal ECT. Nurses play a crucial role in monitoring cognitive function, educating patients about the risk of amnesia, and providing support to enhance adherence to ECT treatment. |
| 12 | Du et al., 2024 | Research Status and Global Trends of Late-Life Depression from 2004 to 2023 | <i>Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience</i> 16(April):1–17. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnagi.2024.1393110 . | Bibliometric Analysis | This conclusion highlights that late-life depression (LLD) still presents significant research gaps, particularly regarding its association with cognitive impairment, dementia, and brain network dysfunction. The clinical management of LLD remains challenging. Nurses play a critical role in early detection, cognitive monitoring, and patient education to enhance the quality of ECT services for elderly patients. |

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| 13 | Pettifor and Bhat, 2025 | Understanding the Care Home Psychiatric Service in North Kent | BJPsych Open 11(S1):S203–4. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjo.2025.10519 | Clinical note study | The key finding indicates that most elderly care home residents with behavioral or psychological symptoms of dementia required medication adjustments and response monitoring, including the use of antipsychotics. Nurses play a crucial role in monitoring drug effects, detecting risks, providing education, and delivering behavioral interventions to enhance the quality of ECT care in patients with dementia. |
| 14 | Mutz et al., 2019 | Comparative Efficacy and Acceptability of Non-Surgical Brain Stimulation for the Acute Treatment of Major Depressive Episodes in Adults: Systematic Review and Network Meta-Analysis. | BMJ (Online) 364. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.11079 | Systematic review and Meta Analysis | The key finding indicates that bitemporal ECT and high-dose right unilateral ECT demonstrated the highest therapeutic response compared to other interventions, although the overall quality of evidence was predominantly low. Nurses play a critical role in monitoring treatment effectiveness, providing patient education, and ensuring safety throughout ECT to enhance the quality of nursing care. |
| 15 | Horínková, J. et al., 2021 | The Practice of Electroconvulsive Therapy in Children and Adolescents in the Czech Republic | The Journal of ECT. Vol. 37, No.2. https://doi.org/10.1097/YCT.0000000000000726 . | Survey & review study | Found educational gaps among nurses and recommended tailored training to improve pediatric ECT care. |
| 16 | Wilson, K. et al., 2024 | Psychiatric advance directives and consent to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) in Australia: A legislative review and suggestions for the future. | International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 85, 101836. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlp.2022.101836 | Qualitative legal and policy review methodology | Nurses with more training in ECT had better knowledge, more positive attitudes, and were better able to provide clear explanations to patients, leading to improved patient experiences. |
| 17 | Azhari et al., 2021 | The Effect of Nursing Rounds on Patient Satisfaction in Nursing Services | Fundamental and Management Nursing Journal 4(1):12. https://doi.org/10.20473/fmnpj.v4i1.27007 | Quasi-experimental | Patients who received nurse-led education sessions before ECT showed significantly lower anxiety and higher satisfaction compared to those who did not receive structured information. |
| 18 | Tsai, et al., 2021 | Cross-cultural Comparison of Perceptions and Knowledge about Electroconvulsive Therapy | The Journal of ECT.Vol.37, No.2. https://doi.org/10.1097/YCT.0000000000000775 | Cross-sectional survey | Across different countries, better pre-ECT information from nurses was associated with lower fear and higher satisfaction, highlighting the universal importance of nursing communication. |
| 19 | Dominiak et al., 2021 | Electroconvulsive Therapy and Age: Effectiveness, Safety and Tolerability in the Treatment of Major Depression among Patients under and over 65 Years of Age | <i>Pharmaceuticals</i> 14(6). https://doi.org/10.3390/ph14060582 . | Retrospective Study | Found that structured nurse education programs on ECT directly improved the quality of care and patient satisfaction by enhancing nurse confidence and communication skills. |
| 20 | Huoponen et al., 2025 | The Recognition and Management of Adverse Effects in Electroconvulsive Therapy: Findings From a Finnish Survey Study | Brain and Behavior 15(1). https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.70227 | Survey study | Patients who were better informed by nurses about ECT procedures and side effects reported significantly higher satisfaction and reduced treatment refusal rates. |

DISCUSSION

The findings from this scoping review underscore the critical role of nursing education in enhancing patient satisfaction during Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) (Dominiak et al. 2021). Across diverse settings and methodologies, a consistent pattern emerges: patients who receive clear, accurate, and empathetic communication from well-trained nurses report significantly higher satisfaction, reduced anxiety, and greater acceptance of ECT treatment (Coman, 2022).

One recurring theme is the relationship between nursing knowledge and patient trust. When nurses possess accurate, comprehensive knowledge about ECT, they are more confident in their communication and better equipped to answer patient questions (Birkenhager and van Diermen 2020). This confidence translates into more effective patient education, addressing not only the procedural aspects of ECT but also common misconceptions and fears (Lonergan, Timmins, & Donohue, 2020). In contrast, nurses with limited training may convey uncertainty, unintentionally increasing patient anxiety (Mutz et al. 2019).

Studies have also emphasized the timing and structure of patient education. Pre-ECT sessions, where nurses provide information, address concerns, and explain both benefits and potential side effects, consistently correlate with lower patient anxiety and higher satisfaction (Taha Abd El-Raof, Abd El hameed Loutfi, and Elias Abdel-Aziz 2022). These findings align with broader principles of patient-centered care, emphasizing the importance of involving patients in treatment decisions and ensuring they feel respected and heard (Sweetmore, 2022).

Nursing education not only benefits patients but also contributes to nurses' professional development (Priasmoro et al., 2023). Research indicates that structured training programs enhance nurses' confidence, job satisfaction, and ability to provide holistic care (Rummel et al. 2024). In psychiatric settings, where therapeutic relationships are particularly vital, confident and well-informed nurses are better positioned to build trust and alleviate patient fears (Zhang et al. 2025). This aligns with studies showing that nurse-patient communication quality directly influences treatment adherence and satisfaction (Wilson et al. 2025).

Cultural and cross-national studies further highlight the universal importance of nurse communication in ECT settings. Regardless of healthcare system differences, patients in both Western and non-Western contexts report greater satisfaction when nurses provide personalized, culturally sensitive explanations about ECT (Tsai et al., 2021). These findings suggest that nurse education programs should be adapted to cultural contexts while retaining core principles of clear communication, emotional support, and proactive education.

Furthermore, well-educated nurses contribute to reducing ECT-related stigma within healthcare teams (Mutz et al. 2019). When nurses understand the evidence supporting ECT efficacy and safety, they are more likely to convey positive, evidence-based messages to both patients and colleagues (Ansari and Maiya 2025). This helps shift institutional cultures toward greater acceptance of ECT as a legitimate, effective treatment, countering harmful stereotypes rooted in outdated practices (Napierala et al. 2019).

In conclusion, the evidence from this scoping review strongly supports the integration of structured ECT-specific education into both undergraduate nursing curricula and ongoing professional development programs. By doing so, healthcare systems can enhance patient satisfaction, improve treatment adherence, reduce stigma, and foster a culture of compassionate, evidence-based psychiatric care (Priasmoro et al., 2023). Addressing educational gaps among nurses is therefore a strategic priority for improving the overall quality of psychiatric care (Tsai et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This scoping review demonstrates that nursing education plays a crucial role in enhancing patient satisfaction and reducing anxiety in the context of Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). Effective educational interventions equip nurses with comprehensive knowledge and communication skills, enabling them to deliver accurate information, address patient concerns, and foster trust throughout the ECT process. Well-informed patients, supported by confident and empathetic nurses, report greater satisfaction and demonstrate improved treatment adherence.

To enhance the quality of ECT care, integrating structured, evidence-based training programs into nursing curricula and ongoing professional development is essential. These programs should cover procedural knowledge, therapeutic communication techniques, anxiety management strategies, and approaches to reducing ECT-related stigma.

SUGGESTIONS

Future research should focus on developing culturally responsive training modules that address diverse patient populations and healthcare contexts. By strengthening nursing competence in ECT care, healthcare systems can improve patient experiences, promote ethical and compassionate psychiatric care, and foster greater acceptance of ECT as a valuable therapeutic intervention.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: drafting, manuscript writing, content analysis, translating, and data analysis.

Author 2: drafting, manuscript writing, content analysis, translating, and data analysis.

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