

Background

Historically, Neurosurgery for Mental Disorder (NMD) has had a chequered history and despite modern techniques, attitudes towards lesion surgery have often been negative.

Several surveys of attitudes towards psychiatric neurosurgery have been conducted in Scotland, but none have focused on attitudes of nurses; who will often provide much of the pre- and post-operative care for patients undergoing neurosurgery. Further, nurses may be an important influence on decision-making by patients.

We set out to assess the attitudes of mental health nursing staff and nursing students, and to compare views to those reported historically by psychiatrists.

Methods

We asked nurses similar questions to those used by the Clinical Resource and Audit Group Working Report on Neurosurgery for Mental Disorder from 1996. Second, we asked additional questions to assess attitudes regarding the role of nursing staff within a psychiatric neurosurgical pathway, and we also asked respondents if they believed it should be included in undergraduate training.

The survey was completed by three groups of staff: 1) inpatient and outpatient nurses working within General Adult Psychiatry; 2) outpatient nurses working within Old Age Psychiatry; and 3) nursing students within the Universities of Dundee and Abertay.

We also compared the results of this survey with the responses provided previously by psychiatrists in the mid-1990s¹ and 2011.²

Results

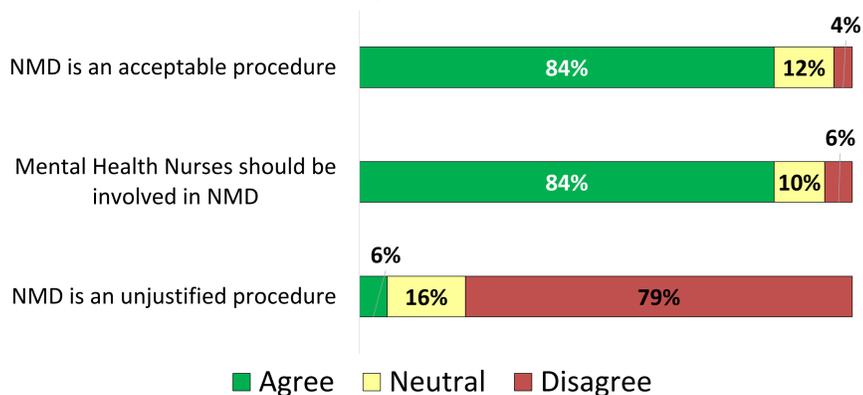
Demographics of respondents

One hundred and seven questionnaires were returned. The majority (80%) of respondents were female. 69% of nurses surveyed were under the age of 45 and 36% had been qualified for 10 years or more. 38% were student nurses.

Current attitudes of mental health nurses & students

General attitudes are shown below. 'Strongly agree' and 'agree' were combined into 'Agree' and 'Strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were similarly combined.

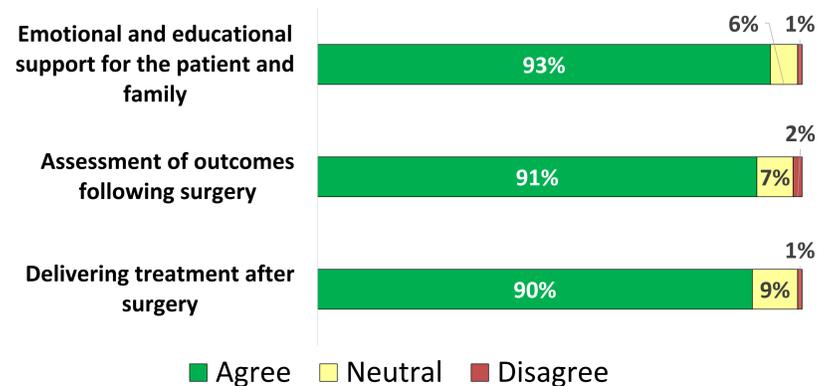
Overall, attitudes are positive, with no evidence of disapproval of the continued availability of NMD.



Qualified nurses were more likely to 'strongly agree' with the statement that NMD was an acceptable procedure than unqualified nurses or students (48% vs 29%). However, overall agreement was similar.

The role of mental health nurses in treatment

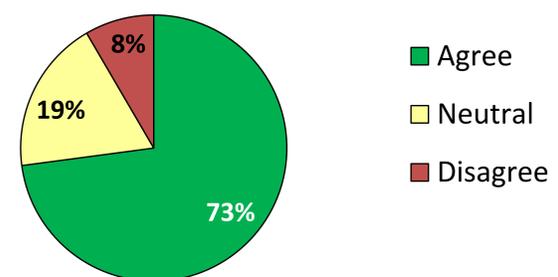
Nurses were asked whether they thought that there were specific roles for Mental Health Nurses in the neurosurgical treatment pathway. Agreement is shown below:



Implications for nurse training

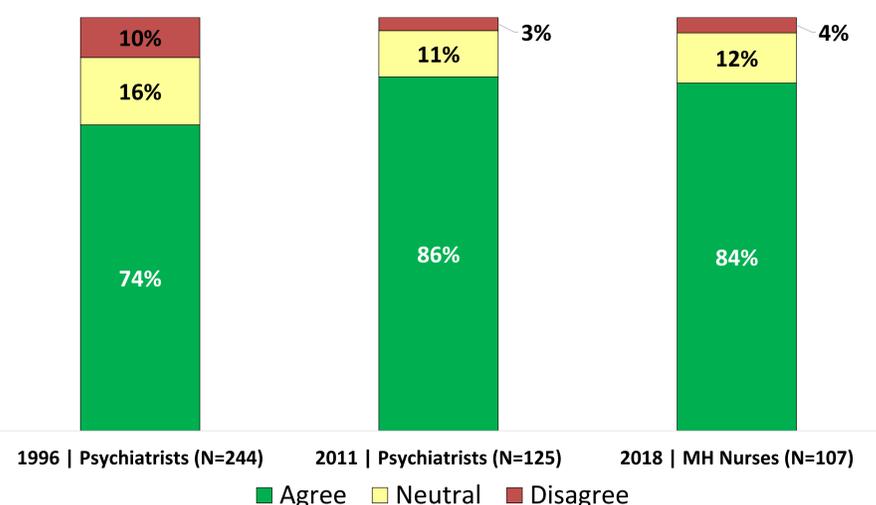
The majority of respondents (73%) thought that the nurse role in specialist treatments such as NMD should be included in nurse training.

Nurse training should include information on specialist treatments such as NMD



Attitudes over time and comparisons to psychiatrists

These seem comparable to psychiatrists, and there is little evidence of significant changes over time.



Discussion

- Nurses and nursing students generally hold positive attitudes towards NMD, and attitudes don't differ between training and clinical practice.
- Mental Health Nurses expressed a strong view that they should have a clear role in the neurosurgical pathway; being involved in assessment, outcome measurement, and supporting families.
- The majority of nurses agreed with statements relating to the need for more training on advanced treatments as part of nurse training.