

## **The Successful Expansion of Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) Program to Outpatients in the PACU**

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**Abstract Background Information:** In November 2022, the inpatient psychiatric unit at NYP-Weill Cornell (WC) reopened following COVID-related closure, with inpatient electroconvulsive therapy resuming in February 2023. By November, an outpatient ECT program launched in the PACU, supported by a multidisciplinary team and integrated per institutional and best practice guidelines for safety and efficiency.

Prior to the launch of the outpatient ECT program in November 2023, all patients in need of ECT at Weill Cornell were either admitted as inpatients or referred to external outpatient facilities, primarily the NYP Westchester Behavioral Health Care, for outpatient care.

**Objectives of Project:** The expansion of the outpatient ECT program aimed to improve access and meet the needs of patients who required specialized psychiatric treatment, eliminating the need for inpatient admissions and external referrals when possible.

**Process of Implementation:** The Donabedian model guided this initiative, focusing on structure, process, and outcomes to ensure high-quality outpatient ECT care. Structure: The team assessed Preoperative and PACU capacity, including space, staffing, and equipment, to support outpatient care without disrupting OR efficiency. Processes: Standardized protocols were developed in alignment with institutional behavioral health standards, with collaboration across WBHC and WC psychiatry to unify patient selection, referral, onboarding, and follow-up. Outcomes: Key metrics included ECT volume, hospital length of stay, patient satisfaction, and readmission rates.

**Statement of Successful Practice:** In its first year (Nov 2023–2024), the ECT program delivered 1,690 treatments, 64% (1,081) of which were outpatient. Of 50 inpatients treated, 20 transitioned to “stepdown” outpatient care, reducing hospital stay by 4.1 days on average and saving an estimated \$601,688. The 90-day psychiatric readmission rate dropped to 4.3%. Among 25 survey respondents, 83% rated care quality as high, 80% felt privacy was respected, 52% found appointments easy to keep, and 45% rated the service highly convenient. Since its initiation the program has continued to expand, averaging 60 treatments per week.

**Implications for Advancing the Practice of Perianesthesia Nursing:** The integration of outpatient ECT alongside inpatient programs in the PACU setting showed promising benefits in enhancing patient care, improving specialty healthcare access and improving healthcare cost management.