

Head shaving in traumatic brain injuries and its significance for patients – A questionnaire study

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Introduction

Scalp shaving is a frequent aspect of neurosurgical procedures, yet the extent and technique vary based on the chosen surgical method, surgeon preferences, and hair characteristics. Historically, complete head shaving was routinely performed; however, current elective surgeries increasingly employ more patient-friendly approaches. In contrast, emergency surgeries following trauma often still require extensive shaving. To better understand patient perspectives, individuals were surveyed on their preferred shaving style in hypothetical traumatic brain injury scenarios.

Methods

Researchers created a questionnaire featuring several fictional situations related to traumatic brain injury. Participants selected their preferred hairstyle outcome from multiple options. The survey was administered to patients attending the neurosurgical outpatient clinic who had not previously undergone cranial surgery.

Results

The survey was completed by 248 patients aged 18 to 85. After traumatic brain injury, 91% preferred minimal shaving. Younger individuals (12.9%) and women (22.2%) demonstrated a strong preference for maintaining their hairstyle, reflecting the importance of self-image. When imagining a prolonged stay in intensive care, a majority (57.7%) favoured shaving the entire head compared to just the injured side (31.5%).

Conclusion

Scalp shaving during neurosurgical procedures can significantly influence body image and psychosocial recovery, particularly among young and female patients. Considering individual preferences and psychological wellbeing in surgical planning is crucial whenever feasible, including in trauma cases.