

Drug-free 'cure' for depression

A DRUG-FREE magnetic wave therapy for depression is to be adopted by the NHS after trials showed it can help up to 70 per cent of patients.

Thirty per cent of these have virtually no symptoms after treatment, and some have been depressed for a decade.

The ground-breaking pulse wave treatment has shown such huge promise after a series of large-scale studies that NHS trusts are adopting it as an alternative to drug-based and talking treatments.

The procedure, already widely used in the United States, was recently introduced by the NHS after trial results showed it can dramatically reduce symptoms of treatment-resistant depression.

The research also shows it can reduce symptoms of anorexia, long-term nerve pain, cocaine addiction, fibromyalgia, obsessive compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Northamptonshire and Camden and Islington NHS trusts have been running trials of transcranial magnetic stimulation. This stimulates areas of the brain known to contribute to depression.

Dr Alex O'Neill-Kerr, a leading psychiatrist and medical director of the Northamptonshire trust, said: "This

EXCLUSIVE

By **Lucy Johnston** HEALTH EDITOR

treatment has given hope to people who had lost hope, because the medical profession has not got answers for them and anti-depressant drugs don't work for so many.

"From a patient perspective, we have seen life-changing results in people who have been depressed for a decade or more. I see patients who are so depressed they can hardly speak, make no eye contact and are not functioning.

"After four weeks of treatment they are laughing, talking and smiling."

The hand-held magnetic device works by stimulating the area of the brain that affects mood, anxiety, decision-making, appetite, energy and sleep.

Scientists believe this encourages the area to "rewire and grow more connections" to work properly again.

Dr O'Neill-Kerr, one of the advisers to Smart rTMS, a company behind the technology, added: "It's like firing up the exchange network to make the telephones connected to it ring again."

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NEWS

Picture: IAN STRATTON



BULLIED AT SCHOOL:
Freddie Webster

'Normal after a decade'

A GRAPHIC designer who suffered from depression for a decade is now free of it after having the new drug-free treatment.

Freddie Webster, 26, from Leatherhead, Surrey, believes his problem stemmed from being bullied at school and having a "tense" home life. He said:

"Life seemed unreal and dreamlike. It was like my response to incredible stress.

"I was sad every day and I couldn't make any decisions, even which shirt to put on in the morning."

He began to have "unwanted, intrusive and frequent thoughts of suicide", which

neither medication nor counselling could relieve.

He heard about the new TMS treatment on a podcast and paid for it privately.

Freddie said: "By the end of three weeks I just felt normal.

"It's like a dam has been taken out of a river."