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Doctor offers new treatment

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By RACHEL MARRS

For The Telegraph

GODFREY - A Godfrey physician has begun work with a non-invasive, drug-free treatment

for depression, anxiety, insomnia and drug addiction.

Cranial electrotherapy stimulation often is referred to as Alpha-Stim, which is a type of treatment that leaves the mind alert.



The Telegraph/JIM BOWLING

Dr. Jeanie Thompson, a Godfrey psychiatrist, has found success in treating patients with cranial electrotherapy stimulation, using a device called Alpha-Stim that attaches to the ears.

"Medications and, sometimes, psychotherapy are usually what psychiatrists use to treat their patients," Dr. Jeanie M. Thompson said. "We didn't learn about cranial electrotherapy stimulation in medical school. It is a cutting-edge, very effective treatment. The side effects of medications are avoided."

During the treatment, the patient wears a small, lightweight device, usually for 20 minutes a day, a few days a week. This delivers a small electrical current through ear clips.

"One usually feels a little tingling as the current is delivered, but it is not unpleasant or uncomfortable," Thompson said. "This results in an increase of the brain's levels of certain brain chemicals and leads to a release of endorphins, or chemicals associated with a feeling of well-being."

The treatment also leads to a decrease in the level of a chemical associated with stress.

When the treatment is effective, patients are in an alert yet relaxed state. The treatment pushes the brain into a state of alpha rhythm, which is the state of calm alert.

"Alpha rhythm is the state that the brain is in when a person is being creative, like when an artist is lost in his or her brushstrokes, or a musician is absorbed in composing or playing beautiful music," Thompson said. "So, Alpha-Stim, like music, art and beauty, is healing in the way that it acts on the brain."

Thompson has been practicing psychiatry for 15 years and has been in a private practice in Godfrey since 2001. After medical school, Thompson did a residency in psychiatry and a fellowship in child psychiatry. She also trained to be a psychoanalyst at the world-renowned Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kan.

"My choice of psychiatry as my specialty and child psychiatry as my sub-specialty reflects how much I enjoy getting to know people and the unique paths their lives have taken," Thompson said. "My use of cranial electrotherapy stimulation has been based on my personal goal to help people feel better using the least invasive, safest and most effective treatment available."

Alpha-Stim can be used safely on both adults and children. It also is being used by some veterinarians to treat animals, especially for pain control.

"I have been using it more with teens, but not as much with young children yet," Thompson said. "But it could be very helpful to young children, as well."

Thompson has been using Alpha-Stim on her patients for a few months.

"I started using it when a respected colleague of mine called me to tell me about the great results she had seen from using Alpha-Stim in her patients," Thompson said. "I feel so grateful that she shared her experience with me, because Alpha-Stim has helped a lot of my patients. It seems to be even more effective than medications for most patients, and it is also much more cost-effective."

Thompson has been amazed at how effective the product has been for her patients.

"People who haven't slept well in a long time now can get a good night's sleep," she said. "It also has been a great help to my patients with anxiety, and it can nip a panic attack in the bud, before it takes on a life of its own."

Thompson said nearly everyone who uses the treatment regularly reports an improvement in mood and an overall feeling of well-being.

Some of Thompson's patients even have been able to get off of their medications.

"Alpha-Stim is the most impressive treatment I've seen in psychiatry since I started practicing 15 years ago," Thompson said.

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