

# **Latest non-invasive medical treatment stimulates neurons to reduce symptoms of fibromyalgia**

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In a unique double-blind study, the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre (the Research Centre) is investigating the clinical potential of repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS), a non-invasive treatment that uses magnetic fields to stimulate neurons in the brain, for the treatment of fibromyalgia.

In 2012 alone, musculoskeletal conditions were estimated to affect 6.1

million Australians and to cost Australia a total of \$55.1 billion in [health care](#) and lost productivity costs. Musculoskeletal conditions are more prevalent than any other National Health Priority Area condition including [heart disease](#), cancer or diabetes. The rate of musculoskeletal conditions, including [fibromyalgia](#), is estimated to rapidly increase by 43% by 2032.

"Despite the prevalence of fibromyalgia and the economic burden it imposes, there are no effective treatments, which is likely due to the fact that there is a complete absence of etiologically-driven treatment options. Existing treatments, such as medications, are not designed specifically to treat fibromyalgia, are largely ineffective and result in a range of adverse side effects," said Dr Bernadette Fitzgibbon, 'Repetitive [transcranial magnetic stimulation](#) for the treatment of fibromyalgia' Study Lead at the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre.

Fibromyalgia affects around 1-3 per cent of the general population worldwide, with symptoms including widespread pain and tenderness in the muscles, ligaments and tendons. Other wide-ranging symptoms include fatigue, depression, headaches, poor quality sleep, and poor memory function. Fibromyalgia, which is linked to changes in the central nervous system, often coexists with other chronic illnesses such as rheumatoid arthritis.

The study calls for 40 participants who: have been diagnosed as having had fibromyalgia for more than six months, and who do not suffer from any other musculoskeletal condition or psychiatric disorder. Participants will undergo a daily course of rTMS over four weeks using the treatment.

**More information:** The Research Centre has used rTMS as a treatment for more than 1100 patients over the past 10 years. rTMS is currently being used as a treatment option for people suffering from

disorders such as depression. Further trials are underway for a range of neurological and psychiatric illnesses.

If you meet the aforementioned criteria, are Melbourne-based and would like to know more about how you can participate in the study, contact Bernadette Fitzgibbon on (03) 9076 9860 or at [bernadette.fitzgibbon@monash.edu](mailto:bernadette.fitzgibbon@monash.edu).

Provided by Monash University

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