

Noninvasive electrical stimulation may help relieve symptoms of PTSD and depression

February 1 2016

A new study indicates that a noninvasive treatment that stimulates nerves through an electrical impulse may help patients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression.

The technique, called External Trigeminal Nerve Stimulation, was delivered to 12 patients who used a device nightly for 8 weeks. Patients experienced significant improvements in symptoms related to PTSD and depression, and scores related to quality of life increased.

Post-traumatic stress disorder affects 3.5% of the general US population and 16.7% of active military personnel, including 31% of those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We're talking about patients for whom illness had almost become a way of life," said Dr. Andrew Leuchter, the Neuromodulation study's senior author, a UCLA professor of psychiatry, and director of the neuromodulation division at UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. "Yet they were coming in and saying, 'For the first time in years I slept through the night,' or 'My nightmares are gone.' The effect of this wearable device was extraordinarily powerful and rapid."

More information: Ian A. Cook et al. Trigeminal Nerve Stimulation for Comorbid Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder, *Neuromodulation: Technology at the Neural Interface* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/ner.12399](https://doi.org/10.1111/ner.12399)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Noninvasive electrical stimulation may help relieve symptoms of PTSD and depression (2016, February 1) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-02-noninvasive-electrical-relieve-symptoms-ptsd.html>

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