

Brain stimulation headset for treating depression at home now for sale in U.K.

November 1 2019, by Bob Yirka



Representatives for [Flow Neuroscience](#) have announced on the company's website that a headset device that they call simply Flow is now available for sale—they claim the device can reduce chronic depression symptoms. The British government recently gave the go-ahead to such devices (as did the EU), citing research showing such devices can be useful for treating long-term, chronic depression. The device is now available to purchase for £399, and includes an app the company claims was created by a team of psychologists. They also note that they are offering a 30-day trial period.

The device sits mostly on the top of the forehead and sends a small jolt of electricity through the skull into the [prefrontal cortex](#) (the part of the brain responsible for personality, decision-making and regulating emotions). The technology, known as [transcranial direct current stimulation](#), has been the subject of numerous tests, most of which have found that it provides some degree of relief from depression symptoms. Many have concluded that it is at least as effective as antidepressants, but without the side effects. Thus far, none of the trials have found any adverse effects of such treatment other than reddened skin where the electrodes are placed and the occasional headache. Such treatments have been found to change the potential of neurons—in some cases, making them fire more often, and in others less often. People with chronic depression typically experience less [neural activity](#) in the left side of their prefrontal cortex—the mild shocks are meant to increase such activity to match that in the right side. Some of the trial results have even shown that in some cases, mild electrical stimulation can encourage the growth of new neural connections, perhaps reducing depression symptoms permanently.

Upon purchase of the [device](#) (after consulting with their own health care professional) users are directed to wear the headset for a half-hour approximately every three days over the course of six weeks. While doing so, they are encouraged to [use the app](#), which provides useful tips, such as reminders to get enough sleep, eat right, and exercise.

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