

Healthy Outlook Blog

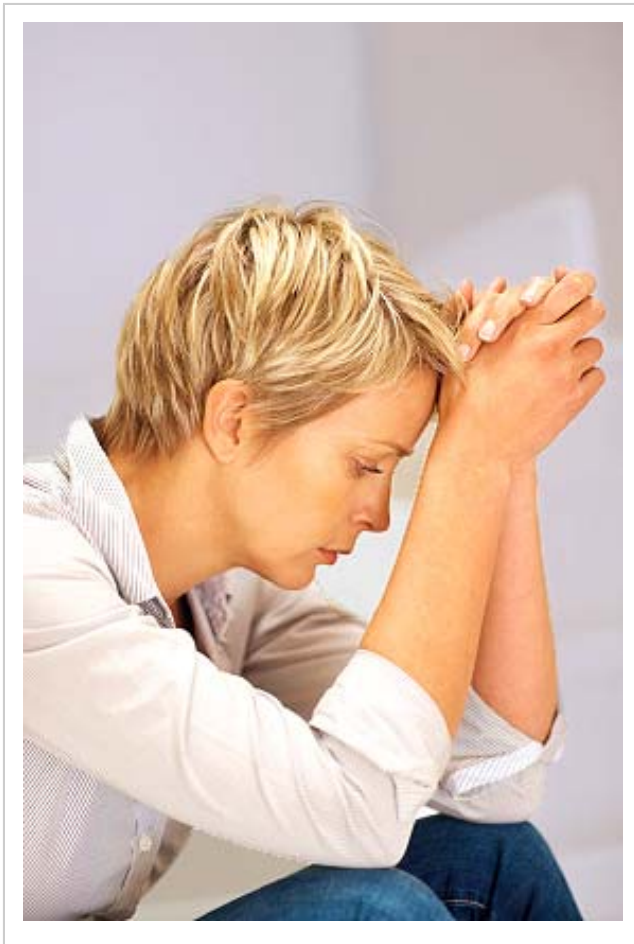
Depression and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation

By Kimberly Hayes Taylor | Posted January 18 2012

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Guest blogger Kimberly Hayes Taylor is a national award-winning journalist who specializes in covering health, fitness and relationships. Her work is published in a number of national online and print publications.

Millions of Americans who suffer from major depression are prescribed antidepressant medication that doesn't offer them relief, or results in intolerable or disagreeable side effects.



A new therapy, [Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation](#) or TMS, which uses highly focused magnetic pulses to stimulate key neurons in the brain that control mood, has been an effective alternative for patients in whom anti-depressant drugs have been ineffective.

“Some people feel like it’s a miracle in their lives,” says [Dr. Alan Manevitz](#), a clinical psychiatrist who practices in New York City and a clinical associate professor of psychology at [Cornell University](#). He was the first doctor in New York State to administer the treatment that is gaining increasing attention in the United States.

“It’s really quite exciting to be able to offer what almost feels like a Star Trek device. Patients sit in a chair, read the newspaper, watch television or talk to our technicians and they go from these really sad stories of not functioning and feeling overwhelmed by their depression to hope.”

Patients come weekdays for about 20 to 30 daily non-invasive treatments, which last about 40 minutes, Manevitz says. After about six weeks, more than half of his patients report significant improvement in their depressive symptoms, and

one-third of patients experience a complete remission.

A study published the October 2010 edition of [Brain Stimulation](#) showed that TMS keeps patients with major depressive disorder on antidepressants from relapsing within six months. Long term persistence of this benefit, however, has not been thoroughly studied.

Without insurance, the magnetic stimulation costs about \$10,500, but many insurance plans now cover it. However, approval may require an appeal, Manevitz says. In general, patients also must have experienced at least one unsuccessful treatment to get insurance approval for TMS.

The TMS has been used to treat other brain conditions for nearly 10 years, but the procedure was cleared by the [Food and Drug Administration](#) in December 2008 for [Neuronetics](#) to market it for use in treatment of major depression. It also has recently been included in the American Psychiatric Association's depression treatment guidelines.

“Because it’s administered by the treating physician, the patient is not responsible for administering the treatment,” Manevitz says. “We observe the treatment, so there is no under dosing, inadequate treatment and there are no systemic side effects such as weight gain, sexual side effects or energy depletion.”

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For more information about major depression, visit the [World Health Organization](#), [PubMed Health](#) or [Wed MD](#). You might also want to check out these earlier healthymagination posts: “[Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation May Offer New Hope for Severe Depression](#)” and “[Deep Brain Stimulation for Depression](#).”