

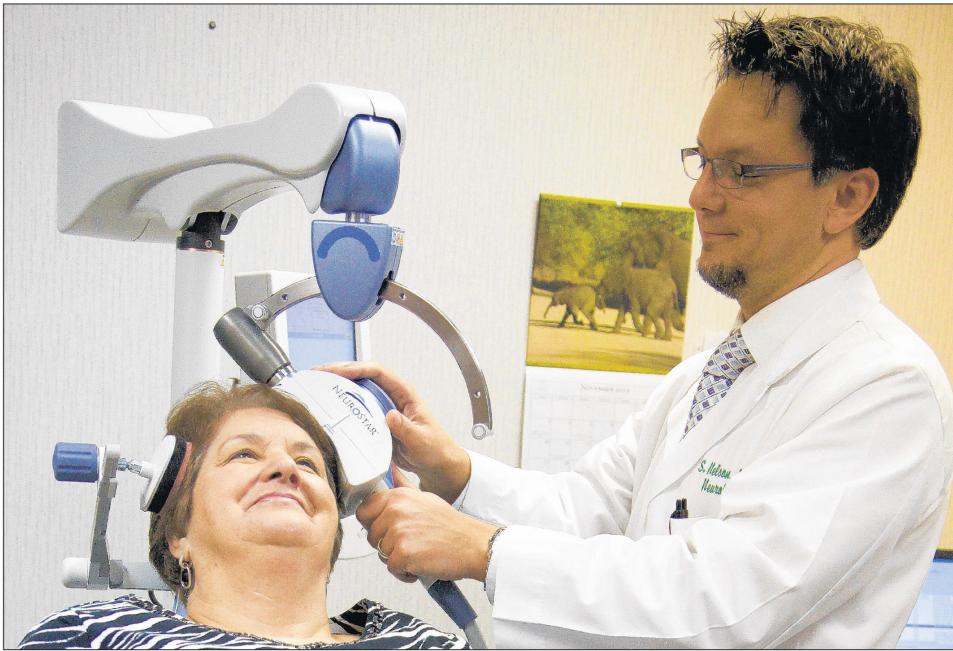
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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2013 • BRISTOL HERALD COURIER • TriCities.com C1

'FEELS LIKE A TAP ON MY HEAD'



TOM NETHERLAND/SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER
Dr. Shawn Nelson, of the Tri-Cities TMS Center, simulates the administration of Trans Magnetic Stimulation therapy to Barbara Harris of Bristol, Va., who has battled depression for more than 25 years. She was the center's second patient to choose and receive TMS therapy. "I'm a believer in this," Barbara Harris said of TMS therapy for depression.

Chronic Depression

New therapy stimulates nerve cells in brain to treat disorder

BY TOM NETHERLAND
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Barbara Harris smiled as if to her grandchildren.

Warm as a hug, real as the twinkle in her eyes Harris did not work to summon her smile.

Call it a lifetime achievement.

For more years than she can recall — at least 25, Harris battled depression. Trans Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) therapy, as administered by her doctor, Stephen L. Wayne, at Tri-Cities TMS Center in Bristol, Tenn., noticeably helped her.

"I'm a believer," said Harris, of Bristol, Va.

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 14.8 million American adults suffer from a major depressive disorder in a given year. Many are prescribed a variety of antidepressants including Prozac. However,

about four million patients do not respond to drugs prescribed. That's where TMS therapy can now come in.

"What's groundbreaking about it is that it's a non-pharmacological and non-evasive measure that we know can help in the treatment of depression," said Dr. Shawn Nelson of the Tri-Cities TMS Center.

TMS therapy stimulates nerve cells in the brain via short pulsed magnetic field — electric charges to the brain. Exploration and data gathering into potential TMS treatment for numerous diseases, primarily depression, dates at least to the 1990s.

Research trials, the two largest of which employed the NeuroStar TMS Therapy System, into safety and effectiveness of TMS treatment for depression mounted. The NeuroStar System,

which is used by Tri-Cities TMS Center, was the first TMS device cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treatment of depression.

"It's easy to say, 'well, we have a treatment and you should believe that it works,'" Nelson said. "But we depend on scientific studies to see if it works."

Take note Tennesseans. Health.com recently reported that Tennessee numbered among the top 10 of the nation's most depressing in regards to adults who suffer from major depression.

Recognition of TMS therapy seems to have spread of late. It's been featured on "The Dr. Oz Show" and on "Dr. Phil." The Tri-Cities TMS Center began employing TMS therapy earlier this year.

"I started in May of 2013," Harris said.

She was the center's second patient to choose and receive TMS therapy.

An adjusting light blue, dental-like chair sits in the center of a small room directly opposite a large flat screen television on a wall. Rows of DVDs including "The Andy Griffith Show," "Cheers" and "Everybody Loves Raymond" occupy shelves along a wall parallel to the chair. Patients can choose to watch one of the DVDs during the therapy.

"The first session, they set me up in the chair," Harris said. "They set the chair for my settings. It's comfortable. I liked to watch 'Everybody Loves Raymond.' When you're watching TV, you don't even realize you're having the treatment."

During the treatment, a coil is placed over the left prefrontal cortex — left of center atop the head and just beyond the hairline, a part of the brain known to affect mood. A focused, pulsed magnetic field generates through the coil to stimulate cortical neurons.

"The first time, my legs went one way and arms went another way," Harris said, laughing upon recollection of the initial pulse, which was then regulated. "It feels like a tap on the head."

Harris said that she experienced no side effects.

"I haven't had any side effects," she said.

However, she did feel the tap.

"It's on the frontal lobe," Nelson said. "The thumbs actually twitch when we fire it. It takes a little courage to sit there as your fingers jump."

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TMS

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Repeats of the process has proven to produce antidepressant effects in people who suffer from depression. Sessions, as with Harris' treatment, span six weeks with five treatments per week for a total of 30.

"It helped me really well," Harris said. "I really believe in the program."

No wonder.

Depression proved debilitating for Harris. For at least 25 years she's suffered what many people attribute as the blues, but the pain was much more severe for her than that which was so simply described as the blues.

"You're existing. You're existing instead of just living," Harris said. "I could spend 19 hours in bed. There were weeks when I didn't get out of the house."

Her son, Duane Harris, died six years ago. Though she had battled depression for years by then, the death of her only child propelled her into a downward depressive spiral.

"He was always my baby," she said.

Pain upon his death intensified such that she couldn't even enjoy memories of her son.

"I couldn't honestly look at his pictures," Harris said.

Life wasn't really life at all for her.

"I was at the point that if I died I didn't care," Harris said.

And so earlier this year, the Tri-Cities TMS Center began to instill use of TMS therapy. Harris, at her wits end, decided to give it a try.

"I guess I was at rock bottom," Harris said. "I said to my doctor, Dr. Wayne, 'I am ready for anything.' I started the next Monday."

Each of 30 sessions in a six-week span lasts about 37 minutes.

From the first to her 30th session, Harris walked out of the office as she walked in, with no side effects. However, there are some potential side effects, Nelson said.

"Scalp discomfort, but we've not had any complaints," he said.

"There is a very, very small risk of a seizure, which it's estimated to be about one in a 1,000, but it's probably less than that. It doesn't cause epilepsy or anything like that."

While she did not experience any negative side effects, positive effects began to emerge for Harris by her third week of therapy.

"I noticed that I started to laugh more," she said. "My husband said, 'I've not seen you laugh that much in a long time.'"

Life for the retired accountant has improved exponentially. It's as if her darkened room now experiences the light of life.

"Oh, and I'm off the pills," Harris said. "I'd probably been on Prozac for 25 years."

Now she smiles a lot, laughs at will and seems the picture of happiness.

She's also begun to accept her son's death.

"I can look at Duane's pictures now," Harris said. "It's not like doom to look at them. I can look back now and see the good times."

She firmly credits TMS therapy with raising the veil of depression's darkness.

"When you get to the point that you are just existing, then you have to take the next step to get back to living," Harris said. "This is new, but it doesn't hurt in any way."

Alas, word has been slow to spread about TMS therapy as an alternative to antidepressant drugs on one hand and as a potential solution when said drugs do not work in treating depression.

"A lot of physicians don't even know about it," Nelson said. "It offers hope when other things have failed."

The coming wave of holidays can prove particularly taxing on a person's emotional state. Depression can elevate among the already depressed, and it can affect those



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for whom depression isn't a daily albatross.

"That's been well documented by patient accounts and scientifically as well," Nelson said. "It's a hard time to try to be happy when you aren't."

For Harris, holidays spelled gloom on the horizon. She wanted to embrace Thanksgiving and Christmas, wanted to enjoy and love and cherish the times, but she just could not do that.

"I just wanted it over," Harris said. "And then when it was over, it was an even bigger let down."

Keep in mind during the coming holidays and beyond, that doctors at the Tri-Cities TMS Center are open for consulting with prospective new patients.

"We will be happy for them to contact us," Nelson said. "Just call." Harris did exactly that.

She can now celebrate her beloved son's life. She's looking forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas as she hasn't in decades. She can smile, laugh and love life as she has been so unable to for more than a quarter century.

"When you get so far down, you don't have nowhere to go but up," Harris said. "I'm a believer in this. I feel like they are really trying to help me. And they have."

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About NeuroStar TMS Therapy®

NeuroStar TMS Therapy indicated for the treatment of Major Depressive Disorder in adult patients who have failed to achieve satisfactory improvement from one prior antidepressant medication at or above the minimal effective dose and duration in the current episode.

The safety and efficacy of NeuroStar TMS Therapy in Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) was studied in a randomized controlled trial of patients who had failed to receive benefit from one to four prior antidepressant medications. A retrospective subgroup analysis of the overall study population demonstrated that the device was safe and effective for patients who had failed to benefit from one prior antidepressant medication of adequate dose and duration in the current episode. In this study population, patients had received a median of 4 total prior antidepressant medication attempts in the current episode, one of which achieved treatment adequacy at or above the minimal effective dose and duration.

In a controlled trial, patients treated with active NeuroStar TMS Therapy received greater than 3 times the improvement in depressive symptoms compared to placebo at four weeks (MADRS, -7.1 vs -2.1, P=0.0006).¹ An open-label, uncontrolled clinical study showed approximately half of the patients treated with NeuroStar TMS Therapy experienced significant improvement in their depression symptoms. About a third of the patients treated with NeuroStar TMS Therapy experienced complete symptom relief at the end of 6 weeks.¹

NeuroStar TMS Therapy should not be used (is contraindicated) in patients with implanted metallic devices or non-removable metallic objects in or around the head. NeuroStar TMS Therapy is not associated with systemic side effects reported for antidepressant medications. The most frequently reported side effect with NeuroStar TMS Therapy is scalp pain or discomfort at the treatment location. There is a rare risk of seizure with NeuroStar TMS Therapy; in post-market experience, the risk is approximately 0.1% (1 in 1000 patients). Patients undergoing treatment for Major Depressive Disorder, including NeuroStar TMS Therapy should be monitored closely for worsening symptoms and signs of suicidal behavior and/or unusual behavior.

The safety of NeuroStar TMS Therapy in the presence of concomitant antidepressant medication was evaluated in a 6-month follow-up open-label clinical trial in patients who had previously responded to acute NeuroStar TMS Therapy. The safety outcomes did not differ from those observed during acute TMS monotherapy.²

The safety and effectiveness of NeuroStar TMS Therapy has not been established in the following patient populations or clinical conditions through a controlled clinical trial: Patients who have failed to receive benefit from 2 or more antidepressant medications given at or above minimal effective dose and duration in the current episode or who have had no prior antidepressant medication failure; Patients who cannot tolerate withdrawal of antidepressant medications; Patients who have a suicide plan or have recently attempted suicide; Depression secondary to a general medical condition or substance-induced; seasonal affective disorder; Patients younger than 22 years of age or older than 70 years of age; Patients with history of substance abuse, obsessive compulsive disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder; Patients with a psychotic disorder, including schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disease, or major depression with psychotic features; Patients with neurological conditions that include history of seizures, cerebrovascular disease, dementia, increased intracranial pressure, having a history of repetitive or severe head trauma, or with primary or secondary tumors in the CNS; Patients with metal in or around the head, including metal plates, aneurysm coils, cochlear implants, ocular implants, deep brain stimulation devices and stents; Patients with vagus nerve stimulators or implants controlled by physiologic signals, including pacemakers, and implantable cardioverter defibrillators; Patients with major depressive disorder who have failed to receive clinical benefit from ECT or VNS; Patients who are pregnant or nursing. NeuroStar TMS Therapy has not been demonstrated to be equivalent in efficacy to ECT for the treatment of major depressive disorder. Efficacy was not studied in patients using concomitant antidepressant medications or receiving psychotherapy during TMS Therapy treatments. Safety and efficacy have not been established for NeuroStar TMS Therapy beyond a 4-6 week acute course, use of treatment parameters outside the labeled protocol or for maintenance therapy.

NeuroStar TMS Therapy is available by prescription only. Patients should talk to their doctor when considering NeuroStar TMS Therapy as a treatment option. For questions regarding this article, please contact Customer Service at 1-877-600-7555. Full safety and prescribing information is available at www.NeuroStar.com.

1. Demitrack MA, Thase ME. Clinical significance of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) in the treatment of pharmacoresistant depression: synthesis of recent data. *Psychopharm Bull.* 2009; 42(2): 5-38
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