

NEW APPROACH to HEALING DEPRESSION

FDA-approved non-drug, non-invasive treatment cures stubborn depression

By Diana Dunne

Living with depression is never easy, but it can become especially challenging during the holidays.

Navigating crowded stores, attending events with family and friends, entertaining at your home—all of these add stress to your normal routine. Both expectation and emotions are elevated and can become overwhelming.

Depression affects approximately 14 million Americans. Until recently, there were two treatment options available—psychotherapy and medication. However, many people who suffer from depression do not benefit from standard treatment.

The first FDA-approved non-drug treatment for depression—NeuroStar TMS Therapy®—is now available at the PsyClinic in Webster. TMS Therapy is revolutionary. It works by stimulating areas of the brain that are underactive in patients with severe depression. Because it is a non-drug, TMS Therapy is free from the side effects that patients often experience when they take antidepressant medication.

Mohamed Ahmed, M.D. has been treating patients with depression for over 16 years. “A percentage of patients with depression have exhausted their options. They’ve tried medication, outpatient treatment and, in some cases, even hospitalization but still suffer,” Dr. Ahmed says. “For these patients, TMS is proven to be effective. This is why I made the decision to bring this cutting edge treatment to my Webster office.”



Dr. Mohamed S. Ahmed is Chairman of the department of Psychiatry at The Methodist Hospital, Baytown, an Assistant Clinical professor at UTMB and founder of The PsyClinic. Visit www.thepsyclinic.com or call 281-837-6463 to schedule a consultation.

Dr. Ahmed answers some frequently asked questions about NeuroStar TMS Therapy.

CM: What is depression?

Dr. Ahmed:

Depression is a painful darkness that can feel like you are living in a cloud or a fog. This feeling is accompanied by lack of energy, motivation, sex drive and focus. It drains the life force out of you.

CM: What is TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: TMS stands for Trans-cranial Magnetic Stimulation of the brain. It is a

non-invasive, painless procedure that stimulates certain areas of the brain to help relieve depression.

CM: Does TMS really work?

Dr. Ahmed: TMS uses the newest technology and is FDA approved to help with depression. It works even in patients who do not respond to all other treatments.

CM: Is it similar to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT, formerly known as shock therapy)?

Dr. Ahmed: Oh no, there's a major difference! ECT is a very invasive, potentially painful procedure that is administered under anesthesia and electrically induces seizures. TMS is painless. It uses a pulsed magnetic field, similar in type and strength to those produced by a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine. During

TMS treatment sessions, you listen to music or watch your favorite TV show.

CM: Why have we not heard of TMS before?

Dr. Ahmed: Since TMS usage began in 2008, more than 500,000 treatments have been safely conducted on patients in more than 400 centers nationwide. TMS is approved by the FDA for treatment of major depressive disorder, giving hope to thousands of patients who have exhausted all other medical options with no results. The equipment became available in Texas not long ago.

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CM: What have your patients experienced with TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: At Psyclinic, we have treated 35 patients over the past seven months with amazing results. These patients have failed all other treatments (including ECT), or they cannot tolerate medication side effects like weight gain, sedation, sexual dysfunction, etc.

CM: Are there any side effects with TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: Other than mild scalp discomfort, no side effects have been reported. Any discomfort usually disappears after the first few sessions.

CM: Are there any contraindications to TMS treatment?

Dr. Ahmed: None, other than metal implants in the head.

CM: What is the cost and does my insurance cover TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: TMS is very affordable when you consider that, for some patients, the cost is lower than the cost of their monthly prescription medication. Flexible payment plans available through The HELPCard® make it affordable for every budget. The financial impact of untreated depression can be devastating when you add up the cost of medication, doctor visits, hospitalization, lost time at work, failed relationships, etc. We ask our patients to consider their quality of life while depressed. What is the value of healing their depression and their lives? Can you put a cost on that?

CM: Does depression go away completely after TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: Statistics (including our patients) show that 2 out of 3 patients are cured (70-75 percent) compared with only 25-30 percent with medication treatment alone. The additional 30 percent of TMS patients show marked improvement in the relief of depression symptoms.

CM: What about relapse? Will depression symptoms return with time after TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: Our statistics (similar to nationwide studies) show that 25-30 percent may show some recurrence of symptoms compared to 70 percent that experience absolute recovery. We offer maintenance treatment (booster) sessions as an option to overcome relapse if depression symptoms return. This usually brings brain activity back in balance.

CM: Does TMS allow the discontinued use of depression medications?

Dr. Ahmed: Most of our patients are able to successfully discontinue use of their depression medications. Some switch to a very low dosage for a short period of time after treatment. We can usually wean them off these medications gradually.

CM: Is there anything you'd like to add to help people understand TMS?

Dr. Ahmed: TMS is a tool that should be considered for every patient with depression. Medication is an option, but the side effects, ineffectiveness and intolerability can be quite a burden for any patient.

TMS is the future of psychiatry, but it is currently underutilized. It is not too good to be true!



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