



BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

NEWS RELEASE

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ADOLESCENTS TARGETTED IN NEW TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION SUFFERERS

Australia is leading the world in initiating a trial to see if TMS – the treatment where strong magnetic fields are used to stimulate the brain via a simple coil held to a patient's head – helps adolescents (15 to 18 year-olds) suffering severe depression.

TMS (full name Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) is non-invasive and is undertaken while a person is fully awake and alert.

For some people, it is seen as alternative to anti-depressant medication.

Worldwide studies have reported that TMS reduced depression, auditory hallucinations, obsessions and compulsions in some sufferers.

The Black Dog Institute, located at the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick in Sydney, has been trialing TMS as a treatment for depression over the past eight years and the results based on 70 participants have been extremely encouraging.

Dr Colleen Loo, the Psychiatrist at the Black Dog Institute heading up the trial, said that positive results had been reported with earlier trials giving two weeks of TMS. "The results have been even much better with six weeks of TMS while, at the same time, the treatment has been enthusiastically received by our patients," according to the Doctor.

Dr Loo said TMS had interesting prospects in the treatment of depression amongst adolescents as the alternatives more than likely were anti-depressants on one hand or ETC (electroconvulsive therapy) which, while being effective, involved an anaesthetic and seizure.

"Psychiatrists and General Practitioners with young patients suffering depression have known about the treatment and we were being requested constantly to explore the likely benefits from TMS in this age group," Dr Loo said. "Surveying adolescents is rare across all areas of medicine but depression and issues such as youth suicide is such an important matter that we need to be doing all we can to provide treatments."

Dr Loo said the Black Dog Institute would be conducting trials with both adolescents and adults and was now seeking people to participate in a survey that involve TMS treatment being provided free of charge and in confidence.

To be suitable, participants need to have suffered from a major depressive episode of less than two years duration. Those interested also need to be able to attend the Prince of Wales Hospital daily for a short time as an outpatient to receive treatment.

Further information call (02) 9382 3720 or email TMSandDCS@unsw.edu.au or visiting the Black Dog Institute Website www.blackdoginstitute.org.au.

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