

Do You Suffer from Anxiety, Depression or Insomnia?



By Lorraine Cancro, MSW

The Fisher Wallace Stimulator, a cranial electrotherapy stimulation (CES) device, is cleared by the FDA for treating anxiety, depression, insomnia and chronic pain. Patients typically report positive affects within 2-4 weeks, and sometimes as early as after one usage. In very rare cases, the only side effects reported are light headache and slight dizziness. The device delivers micro-currents of electricity to the brain to stimulate the production of neurochemicals such as serotonin, dopamine, and neuropeptide while decreasing the stress hormone cortisol. Low levels of serotonin and dopamine are directly linked to depression, anxiety, sleep disturbance and other disorders. CES has been in clinical use in the United States since 1963 and in Europe since 1953.

I was first introduced to the owner of the company, Charles Avery Fisher, in 2008. When I learned of this wonderful device I arranged for my father's neurologist to prescribe it for my father who was suffering from Parkinson's Disease for over ten years. I'd hoped that it might alleviate his low grade depression as well as improve his mobility. After the first usage, I was amazed when he was able to grab hold of the arms of his wheelchair and start to pull himself up and stand successfully. This may not sound like much but he'd not

been able to get up from a sitting position on his own for months. I was truly amazed at his ability to raise himself up and steady himself. Parkinson's disease lowers your level of dopamine which impacts movement, sleep and mood.

I was also working with veterans as a Clinical Social Worker. I wanted to introduce my friend's company and device to my colleagues who might spearhead research and treatment using the device. They prescribed the device for a few veterans and civilians who were suffering from symptoms of PTSD including depression, sleep disturbances and anxiety. In a short time, one of the patients felt relief from anxiety as well as reported improved sleep. This response was intriguing enough for me to want to spread awareness of this device not only through awareness raisers but also through EP.

In June 2008, I hosted an event at the home of Mrs. Frank Perdue, Mitzi, in Manhattan who took an interest in the device given that she is a big supporter of our military. I invited Chip Fisher to speak at the event along with Robert Cancro, MD, of the International Committee Against Mental Illness, to discuss the device. The attendees were very intrigued to learn about the device.

Robert Cancro, MD, Chairman Emeritus of NYU Langone's Medical

Center's Department of Psychiatry, recently launched a program for those suffering from stress disorders under the International Committee Against Mental Illness. The division is called the United Stress Disorders Association. Dr. Cancro is employing the Fisher Wallace device as a non pharmacological form of treatment for those who suffer from PTSD and other stress related disorders.

Dr. Cancro states, "ICAMI recently launched our United Stress Disorders Association that's pursuing treatment and research related to PTSD and other stress related disorders. Currently, we are employing certain non-pharmacologic treatments for stress such as transcendental meditation and the Fisher Wallace cranial electro-stimulator. Studies done at Phoenix House and Harvard, among others, have shown that the device can alleviate anxiety, depression and insomnia with next to no side effects. The only side effects I've encountered with my patients were slight headaches. With PTSD and other stress disorders on the rise we hope to use the device to treat returning veterans and civilians."

Cranial electrotherapy stimulation (CES) has been shown to produce improvements for individuals afflicted with insomnia, depression, and anxiety who also struggle with substance abuse.

Recently, the device was used in a successful pilot program with 399 drug addiction patients at Phoenix House, the nation's largest, non-profit drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. Patients who used the Fisher Wallace Stimulator during their first month in residential treatment were 50% more likely to remain in rehab after 90 days in comparison to those who did not use the device. Sessions with CES were well tolerated and clients reported improved sleep, reduced anxiety and reduced stress.

The device has been introduced to the military and they are currently using it for treatment at Walter Reed Hospital. You can find more on CES at the National Veterans Foundation website www.vet411.org. Veterans are excited to use the device as so many are suffering from symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Mike Davis, a Vietnam Veteran (US Army, Retired) and Founder of Vietnam Combat Veterans, Ltd. says, "I was a slave to sleep medications for over twenty years. After just one week of twice daily use of the Fisher Wallace Stimulator, I started cutting back on the sleep meds. For nearly two months now, I've been completely off the medications, sleeping longer and waking more rested than ever." For more click on his testimony below:

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The CES device is groundbreaking in that it is a non-pharmacologic treatment which has shown to be effective within 1 to 4 weeks after someone starts using the device. Psychiatrists prescribe it either once or twice a day—depending on the severity of the symptoms. With deeply entrenched depressions, twice a day sessions at 20 minute intervals are most effective. Patients will know when the treatment is finished as the device shuts off automatically after

20 minutes. There have been no reports of adverse reactions even when patients have used it more often than prescribed. Although, by no means is it recommended that you overuse it.

In 1974, the FDA funded a safety study of Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation by the National Research Council's Division of Medical Sciences. The National Research Council reported back to the FDA that there was no possibility of harm to human subjects from the low level of electrical stimulation (4 milli-amps) delivered by the technology.

CES devices have also shown to be effective in treating obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorders, schizophrenia, addictions and memory problems, although these are not conditions which the FDA has cleared the device for treatment.

Dr. Felipe Fregni, a top neuroscientist at Harvard Medical School, published a recent (2009) article comparing alternative current (AC) and direct current (DC) forms of Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation in a paper entitled "Noninvasive brain stimulation with low-intensity electrical currents, putative mechanisms of action to direct and alternating current stimulation," which you can download and read at the Fisher Wallace website, www.fisherwallace.com.

Columbia University psychiatrist Richard P. Brown, MD, says he has used the device with 400 severely depressed patients and that 75% have found it to be effective—about twice the rate of antidepressants. "I'm seeing some patients smile for the first time in 20 years," says Dr. Brown, who, like other doctors interviewed for this column, has no financial ties to the company.

There have been over 30 published, peer-reviewed studies that speak to the effectiveness and safety of this device. All of these studies are accessible on the Fisher Wallace website and most are available on the NIH website, pubmed.com.

Members of the armed forces and

their families may purchase the Fisher Wallace Stimulator at a significant discount through the Fisher Wallace website by entering the coupon code FW495 during the online checkout process. A prescription is required and must be faxed to the company prior to an order being shipped. The purchaser may return the device for a full refund within 60 days of receipt if it does not successfully treat the purchaser's symptoms. More details are available on www.FisherWallace.com.

Patients may find a doctor familiar with the device by clicking on the Find A Doctor link on the company's homepage and entering their zip code.

Below is a list of current ongoing research projects that have been initiated using the device.

- **Massachusetts General Hospital (Harvard Medical School)**—A study of CES and the treatment of Major Depressive Disorder with David Mischoulon, MD and Darin Dougherty, MD with 25 subjects.
- **University of Maryland**—A study of CES and its effect on reducing depression in Parkinson's subjects, with Gad Alon, PhD, and William Weiner, Chair, Department of Neurology.
- **Columbia University**—A study of CES and its effects treating Depression, Anxiety and Insomnia in drug addicts during the first 30 days of detoxification, and its effects upon retention levels in a residential drug rehabilitation facility—Odyssey House—New York City. Edward Nunez, MD—Columbia University and John Rotrosen, MD—New York University with Gary Harmon, CMO of Odyssey House.
- **McLean Hospital (Harvard Medical School)**—A study of CES and its effects upon treating Depression, Anxiety and Insomnia in patients suffering from PTSD—a pilot study with 15 subjects—Scott Lukas, MD—Director, Neuroimaging Center and Director, Behavioral Psychopharmacology Research Laboratory—McLean Hospital.
- **Fort Carson, CO. Insomnia study.**