

101 Brain Stimulator for Face Pain

To air the week of January 7, 2008

Intro: It's like a knife stabbing you in the face. That's how some patients with chronic and severe face pain describe the agony of their condition. Many times doctors aren't sure why it happens, but it's real and symptoms can be tough to treat. But at Mayo Clinic doctors are treating the debilitating pain for some patients with what you could call a brain pacemaker.

Video

Total running time 1:37

Monica Bogucki

Had severe face pain

To surgery video

Audio

MIXING THE INGREDIENTS FOR A BIG BATCH OF BROWNIES IS ONE WAY MONICA BOGUCKI TRIED TO GET HER MIND OFF OF HER PAIN "IT WAS A CONSTANT PAIN. 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK, AND IT DID NOT COME AND GO." FOR 10 YEARS MONICA SUFFERED DEBILITATING FACE PAIN CALLED ANESTHESIA DOLOROSA. DOCTORS AREN'T SURE WHAT CAUSED IT. AND MEDICATIONS COULDN'T STOP IT. BUT A NEW BRAIN STIMULATION PROCEDURE STUDIED AT MAYO CLINIC DID.

Kendall Lee, M.D., Ph.D.
Mayo Clinic

Standup
Vivien Williams
Reporting

To animation

“ONE OF THE THERAPIES WE’RE WORKING ON FOR THIS IS CALLED MOTOR CORTEX STIMULATION.” DR. KENDALL LEE SAYS THE MOTOR CORTEX IS THE PART OF THE BRAIN THAT CONTROLS VOLUNTARY MOVEMENT. AND BY STIMULATING THE MOTOR CORTEX WITH A SMALL AMOUNT OF ELECTRICITY, FACE PAIN MAY DIMINISH AND IN SOME CASES GO AWAY. DR. LEE USES FUNCTIONAL MRI GUIDANCE TO PINPOINT THE RIGHT SPOT ON THE MOTOR CORTEX. THERE HE IMPLANTS ELECTRODES. NEXT HE STIMULATES THE MOTOR CORTEX USING A TEMPORARY PULSE GENERATOR TO SEE IF THERE IS PAIN RELIEF. IF THERE IS, HE THEN IMPLANTS A WIRE THAT CONNECTS TO A PERMANENT PULSE GENERATOR THAT LOOKS

Animation out

LIKE A PACE-MAKER. THE THEORIES ARE THAT THE ELECTRICAL CURRENT EITHER JAMS THE PAIN TRANSMISSION SYSTEM OR CHANGES THE BRAIN CHEMICALS THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAIN. BUT WHAT MATTERS MOST IS THAT PEOPLE LIKE MONICA FIND RELIEF FROM THE PAIN.

Kendall Lee, M.D. Ph.D.
Mayo Clinic

“THEY GO FROM A PAIN THAT WAS EXCRUCIATING AND UNCONTROLLED TO A PAIN THAT IS CONTROLLED.”

Monica Bogucki
Had severe face pain

“IT IS A MIRACLE. WE CALL THIS OUR MIRACLE YEAR.”
FOR MEDICAL EDGE, I’M VIVIEN WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

The surgery worked very well for Monica but it is not right for everyone with face pain. Dr. Lee says it takes a team of many experts including neurologists, pain specialists, surgeons and the patients themselves to make sure this procedure is the right treatment option.

Dr. Lee and his team continue to study ways to treat pain with electrical stimulation and are also striving to understand the mechanisms of pain.

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