

LAKE TIME MAGAZINE

• A STATE OF MIND •

SUMMER 2017

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THE RISE OF OPIATE ADDICTION & A LOCAL COMPANY'S ANSWER

There is no question the drug epidemic is getting worse. Deaths have been on the rise over the past 15 years with more than a half of a million people having died from addiction between 2000 and 2015. There is little debate that opioids are a large part of the problem: six out of 10 of those deaths can be connected to opioids, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In fact, 91 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose (that includes prescription opioids and heroin).

People in pain are looking for relief and they are frequently prescribed opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine. The problem is that over time the body develops a tolerance to the drugs requiring higher dosages and decreased pain relief. Some patients who use opiates also develop a heightened sensitivity to pain called hyperalgesia. In other words, they have more pain than they had before using these strong pain relievers. That's right, more medication over time leads to less relief of pain, more side effects, and more danger for addiction.

Because the withdrawal symptoms are so difficult to handle, many users find heroin to deal with the pain and withdrawal symptoms. The National Institute on Drug Abuse says nearly 80% of Americans using heroin (including those in treatment) reported misusing opiates prior to using heroin. With opioid addiction on the rise, more and more people are looking for non-drug treatment options.

Alpha-Stim, a hand-held, noninvasive prescription medical device, is FDA cleared to provide safe, fast, and effective treatment of anxiety, insomnia, depression, and pain. The Alpha-Stim treatment is proven by more than 100 clinical research studies and over 35 years of use. That's right: four different benefits in one small device!

Begin Healing, Inc. is the local Minnesota distributor for Alpha-Stim, and provides sales as well as customer service for everyone in the state using the device. Marlene Stenlund R.N. and Bryan Stenlund MS/LP Psychologist, formed Begin Healing, Inc. 15 years ago. They shared a belief that when given proper tools and guidance, people who are suffering can gain innate strength and vitality to begin healing. Neuroscience shows us that all beings possess their own inner pharmacy. Alpha-Stim is one of the tools that supports the ability for the mind and the body to restore its healing capacity.




The technology is state-of-the-art and rather complex, but here is the idea in a nutshell. **Alpha-Stim uses a very small pulse of electricity to stimulate the body and the brain with the patented waveform.** Unlike drugs, Alpha-Stim treatments are cumulative and the body will not accommodate to this therapy - which means the body does not build a tolerance to it, and it is non-addictive. Alpha-Stim targets receptors, and activates them through frequencies matching in a manner like chemical ligands. One of those chemicals is called endorphins: the body's own morphine-like substance. Over time, fewer and/or shorter treatments will be needed to achieve the same level of pain relief.

When treating the mental health indications, you apply the Earclip Electrodes on the earlobes, and set the timer to 20, 40, or 60 minutes. During a treatment, you can relax, watch a show, read a book, and in general go about your business (it's just not recommended to drive a car). Another plus, especially for commuters and office workers, is that the Earclips are inconspicuous, so it looks like you might be listening to music on earbuds.

For the pain treatments, you can pull out the Smart Probes and treat a bad knee for about five minutes, for example - or apply the AS-Trode Silver Electrode Pads, which stick to the body for continuous stimulation and pain relief.

Tracy Austreng is an Alpha-Stim customer who wanted to tell her story about her difficulty with prescription opioids and chronic pain, in the hope that others may benefit.

Three years ago, Tracy was taken off the pain killers she had been prescribed for eight years. Her pain began in 1998 after a complication from surgery and being diagnosed with a thyroid disorder and fibromyalgia. After three years of searching for relief, she was given a prescription for an opioid called Percocet. Instead of "drooling on a pillow" in pain after working in her salon, she had some pain relief and a boost of energy she needed to remain active and productive. As time went on she needed stronger and more powerful medication. By the end of eight years, she was taking a fentanyl patch and oxycodone three times a day, as prescribed. The effects were so gradual that she didn't notice how the drugs affected her. "I was sedated and had a weird depression. I was a walking Zombie," she says.



Recognizing the addiction and overdose deaths, many healthcare practitioners are using these dangerous medications on a very limited basis. In 2014 Tracy's doctor tapered her off the opioids.

Tracy was not prepared for what she experienced after she stopped using the pain medication. Instead of a few days of discomfort, the withdrawal symptoms lasted for a year. "I lost my mind," she relates.

She experienced two nervous breakdowns which lead her to be admitted to the Wellstone Crisis Center, and she was eventually seen by psychologist Erikka Lamar and nurse Sue Long at the Virginia Essentia Health Integrated Behavioral Health program where she received emotional help, guidance, and Alpha-Stim treatments. She sees the help she received from both programs to being pivotal in her recovery.

Tracy's recipe for healing is to have strength and the proper support to learn to care for yourself. Part of her self-care is using the Alpha-Stim. When she uses it, she becomes calm and relaxed. "It's like an endorphin rush." She is amazed by the relief she gets from treating herself with the Alpha-Stim. "It's amazing how it charges up your system - and it's not a scary drug!" She cautions anyone who has chronic pain to avoid using opioids. Even though she took her medication as directed, she became addicted. She now understands how some people begin to use street drugs. "I know what makes people rob, kill, and destroy themselves. Withdrawal is horrible, it consumes you."

Tracy now feels transformed. She has found the key to unlocking her own potential and believes that caring for oneself is a choice. She has found pleasure in simple things in life like singing, and teaching others how to get rid of what holds them back in living a joyous life.

Due to her chronic pain issues, she

has had to learn to pace herself. She can work part-time and teaches a Chronic Disease Health Management course on chronic pain developed out of Stanford University at Essentia Health in Virginia and through Fairview Range Hospital in Hibbing.

Tracy's story shares important wisdom in overcoming adversity. She teaches us that "strength and guidance" are at the root of the healing process. The other lesson is that opioids for the treatment of chronic pain actually weaken the body, mind, and spirit.

CHRONIC PAIN IS A COMPLEX CONDITION WHICH REQUIRES A NUMBER OF RESOURCES FOR THE PATIENT.

Sometimes there is medication or surgery or an injection that helps, but the best treatment includes the addition of complementary therapies like Alpha-Stim and mental health treatment. The hope is that this terrible opioid epidemic can be solved by reducing the need for these dangerous drugs.

Alpha-Stim treatments and consultations are available through licensed providers at Stenlund Psychological Health and Wellness in Grand Rapids, Range Mental Health in Hibbing and Virginia, Kind Mind in Hibbing, Residential Services, Inc. in Virginia and Duluth, and many Essentia Health Clinics in northern Minnesota, including their Chronic Pain Program in Duluth and the Integrative Behavioral Health Program in Virginia.

Call Begin Healing at 218-327-0444 for a complete listing or if help is needed to find a practitioner.

