



Mental Health

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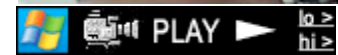
Brain Waves Predict Depression Meds

LOS ANGELES (Ivanhoe Broadcast News) -- About 17 million Americans suffer depression, which is the fourth-leading cause of disability in this country. Antidepressants are effective treatments, but there's only a 30-percent chance patients will respond to the first drug they try. Now, there's a new way doctors can find out which treatment will work best for you.

Alone is how June Govinden has spent the last 10 years of her life, living in the fog of depression. "I really lost touch with friends and family," she says. "I did try to commit suicide. I felt as though I was not a person worthy of being here."

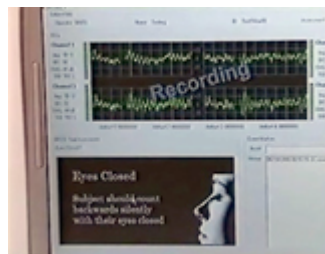
Govinden tried taking antidepressants, but couldn't find one that helped. And with more than 20 drugs on the market, Govinden isn't alone.

Psychiatrist Andrew Leuchter, M.D., says not every antidepressant is going to work well for each individual. And the drugs that do work take a long time to work -- sometimes months.



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"The challenge we face is trying to get patients on the right medicine quickly and get them to stay with the medicine long enough to get well," Dr. Leuchter, of UCLA School of Medicine, tells Ivanhoe.

Now, a new version of an EEG -- a test that measures brain wave activity -- may be the answer. As part of a clinical trial, participants -- like Govinden -- had the 10-minute test before and after starting a new treatment. The EEG was about 85-percent accurate at predicting if a patient responded to a particular drug within one week of taking it.

Dr. Leuchter says, "If they show the right signal, we can say with a pretty good degree of certainty, you know, that is the right medication." Another advantage of the EEG is it's inexpensive and easy to use. He hopes the test will be FDA approved for this use within four years. Right now, researchers at 10 sites around the country are enrolling patients to further test the technology.

Through this research, Govinden finally found an antidepressant that worked. "I'm slowly getting back in touch with my family. I get up on the weekends and do things, rather than sleeping," she says. "You know, I'm happier."



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If you would like more information, please contact:

The Laboratory of Brain Behavior and Pharmacology

University of California, Los Angeles
760 Westwood Plaza, Room 37426
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(310) 825-3351
<http://www.depressionresearch.com>



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2745 West Fairbanks Avenue
Winter Park, Florida 32789
(407) 740-0789

P.O. Box 865
Orlando, Florida 32802

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