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## **z- Z-ZAPPED Shocked out of pain & anxiety**

By Jerry Kindela Editor-in-Chief

At one time or another, most bodybuilders have relied on the RICE prescription (rest, ice, compression, elevation) when dealing with injured muscle (and joint) tissue. Using anti-inflammatory agents has been yet another option. Ultimately, much of this effort has been aimed at reducing pain.

Now, bodybuilders may have still another option, one that not only reduces pain but may help the healing process as well. This option may also provide the opportunity to reduce anxiety, stress and possibly depression and insomnia so common in overtrained athletes.

What sounds like a gift from heaven is really a small but powerful (yet deceptively simple-looking) battery-powered device known as a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulator. Though a number of companies manufacture the device, one company in particular, Electromedical Products International, has been quite aggressive in promoting its unit, called the Alpha-Stim 100. This device and its cousins are gaining notoriety almost daily for their successful management of pain, enhanced treatment of certain kinds of injuries and improved brain-wave states.



### **PAIN MANAGEMENT & ENHANCED HEALING**

Basically, the sophisticated technology of a device like the Alpha-Stim delivers a current, measured in microamperes (millionths of an ampere), to a pain site through electrodes that are readily attached to the surface of the skin by two to four adhesive patches. (A wand-like electrode probe may also be utilized with Alpha-Stim for improved pain management.) One theory holds that the current helps the body release endorphins to reduce pain, but Alpha-Stim's inventor, Daniel Kirsch, Ph.D., sees it differently. The neurobiologist notes that the body's bioelectrical system "controls the function of everything . . . and allows the organs to communicate with each other. The body heals naturally by electrical communication when one cell is stimulated to grow, and then passes that message to another." Kirsch further indicates that his bioelectrical unit fools the "cells into thinking the area is functioning normally. It achieves homeostasis, a state of balance."

Kirsch can point to countless studies affirming the benefits and successes of bioelectric therapy -- from migraine headache management and low back pain treatment to seemingly efficacious effects in assorted substance-abuse detox situations.

## **ANXIETY & STRESS**

Kirsch notes that his instrument provides a "brain boost" delivering faster and more effective treatment of assorted stress-related conditions, including headaches and physical tension in the neck and trapezius areas. Regular use may even improve the ability to focus mentally and stay alert without getting anxious.

This approach to stress and anxiety treatment is formally known as Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation (CES). Essentially, a low-level current measured in microamperes is sent from one electrode to another placed at the earlobe regions. More than 100 studies conclude that CES is a highly effective treatment modality for insomnia, depression and anxiety. The Kuwaiti government was so convinced of this potential that it purchased 300 units from Kirsch for its nationwide stress-treatment program following the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion and subsequent Gulf War.

When you think about the possible applications in bodybuilding -- from pain management to the lessening of anxiety (perhaps even an occasional bout with overly aggressive behavior) or insomnia -- bioelectric therapy may be just what the doctor ordered.