

Help for Breast Cancer Side Effects

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (Ivanhoe Newswire) -- Each year, more than 200,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer. Most undergo chemotherapy and are forced to endure the many side effects that come with it. Now, doctors say stimulating the brain may help relieve those side effects.

Carmel Nail has breast cancer. "I was diagnosed with breast cancer, underwent a mastectomy and started chemotherapy," she says. "I am somebody who helps people through these processes and problems, and then here I am having to deal with it, firsthand."

To help her deal with it, Nail, a nurse, joined a study at the University of Virginia School of Nursing in Charlottesville to treat the side effects of breast cancer therapy.

Debra Lyon, R.N., Ph.D., one of the nurses involved in the study at the University of Virginia School of Nursing, says there's a pretty high incidence of psychiatric symptoms such as depression and anxiety. She says sleep disturbances and fatigue are also common.

Now, Lyon is studying cranial micro-current electrical stimulation for relief. "It works much as a homeostatic regulatory type of therapy," she says. "We're not changing the current or the energy field in the body, except to re-normalize it."

For one hour a day, women attach ear clips that send a micro-current to the brain. They activate pathways that relieve symptoms.

Nail has finished the study, but she's still receiving chemotherapy. "I do experience a little more anxiety, just day-to-day, related to the chemo. I felt probably a little more relaxed while I was utilizing the stimulator device," she says.

Lyon hopes the device will be an effective alternative for women. She says: "My hopes go back to the passion that made me become a nurse in the first place. I want to take care of people and help people to feel better."

The study is still ongoing at the University of Virginia. The device already has FDA approval to treat insomnia, depression and anxiety. It does require a prescription. A recent study has shown the device may also be helpful in reducing pain from fibromyalgia.