

Mirror



The Alpha-Stim is being trialled by 120 patients in Nottinghamshire from this month

The Alpha-Stim – already used by the UK and US military to treat post-traumatic stress – uses mild electric pulses to stimulate the brain and could replace drug treatment

A device that uses mild electric shock to treat depression and anxiety is being trialled by the NHS.

Already in use by the British Army and US military for post-traumatic stress, the gadget works by stimulating the brain.

The Alpha-Stim, which is the size of a mobile phone, sends micro-currents of electricity to increase a patient's naturally occurring “alpha waves” that are said to create a more relaxed state of mind.

The £399 devices are being given this month to 120 patients at the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for a year-long study.

The drug-free treatment, which takes around 20 minutes a day, involves two electrodes being clipped to the earlobes with wires running to the machine, giving the impression the patient is simply wearing headphones.

The hands-free device delivers a tiny, painless electrical current, measuring less than one milliampere, to the brain that is believed to have a therapeutic effect that can also help insomniacs.

Peter Caunt, of the Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust, said: “We know this type of therapy works.

“The key to this study is to find out how cost-effective it can be compared to conventional treatments involving tablets and cognitive behavioural therapies.”