

Congressman Bill Johnson

HVAC Member Day Hearing Statement on TMS

Thank you Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe for this opportunity to share with you my support for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee examining the effectiveness of a noninvasive procedure called Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) as a treatment option for veterans suffering from PTSD and TBI. We are all aware of the tragic, increased risk for veterans - suffering from PTSD and TBI - of dying from accidental injury, viral hepatitis and suicide, compared to the general population. And, I am pleased to share with you efforts underway in Ohio to provide TMS as an additional, alternative treatment for these veterans.

As you may know, TMS treatments are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat depression. TMS therapy is conducted by noninvasive procedures through which an electromagnet is charged with electricity and then placed over specific points on a patient's skull, creating a powerful magnetic field that can positively affect brain cells. It does not involve surgery or require the use of sedation or other medications. However, there is growing evidence that, in addition to treating symptoms of depression, TMS can also help veterans suffering from PTSD.

You may be interested to learn that through the leadership of Ohio State Senator and retired Navy SEAL, Frank Hoagland, the state of Ohio has recently authorized a Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation Fund through the State Treasury, and a pilot program to be conducted by the Directors of Veterans Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services and AMVETS. In coordination with the Veteran's Medical Initiative (VMI) and industry leaders in medical technology, the three-year program will make TMS available for veterans with substance use disorders or mental illness. I'm very pleased to see Ohio taking action to provide our veterans with new and innovative individualized care and treatment options.

Additionally, you may know that the VA Center for Compassionate Care Innovation (CCI) has supported the expanded use of TMS treatment at the Providence VA Medical Center in Rhode Island, including for PTSD. As of June 2018, it was reported that over 150 patients have received TMS therapy since 2013 at the Providence VAMC and demand continues to increase.

Ranking Member Roe, given your leadership and advocacy for veterans suffering from invisible wounds, I am greatly interested in your thoughts on this type of treatment. And, Mr. Chairman, given the potential of this type of treatment to manage symptoms of substance use disorders and mental illness, I respectfully urge the Committee to hold a hearing to examine whether TMS is a viable, alternative treatment option for veterans suffering from PTSD and TBI, in addition to depression. Since some VA Medical facilities have already treated veterans through TMS therapy, perhaps the VA could share with the Committee the effectiveness of this treatment, in addition to whether VA plans to expand this treatment option and what obstacles may be preventing other VA facilities from also offering TMS therapy to veterans.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share with you the potential of noninvasive treatments, such as TMS therapy, and efforts being made in Ohio to expand treatment options for our nation's heroes. I yield back the balance of my time.