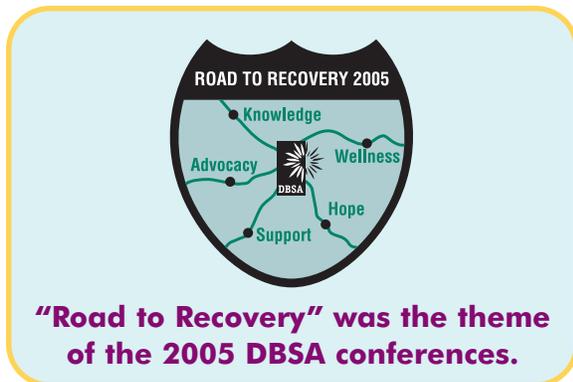


## Thousands mark National Depression Awareness Month with screenings, conferences

Every year, almost 19 million Americans, or about 9.5% of the population, have depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.<sup>1</sup> On October 6, more than 7,000 sites across the country participated in National Depression Screening Day. Colleges, hospitals, health clinics, and community service organizations hosted the free, anonymous screenings. Over 100,000 people filled out questionnaires in person at these sites. People also had the opportunity to meet with a mental health professional and receive information about treatment.



National Depression Screening Day is part of Mental Illness Awareness Week, held October 2–8, 2005. During the week, millions of Americans honored the challenges of people with mental illness and celebrated their recoveries.

In addition, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) held the last of its annual conferences on Saturday, October 8

in Fort Worth, TX. DBSA is the nation's leading patient-directed group dedicated to mood disorders—depression and bipolar disorder. This year for its 17th annual conference, the DBSA held 3 regional events instead of one national conference. The first 2 were held in Rosemont, IL, on August 27 and Whippany, NJ, on September 10. Featured speakers included:

- Andy Behrman, author of *Electroboy: A Memoir of Mania*
- Peter Ashenden, Executive Director of the Mental Health Empowerment Project, Inc
- Jan Fawcett, MD, coauthor of *New Hope for People with Bipolar Disorder*

The Fort Worth event ended with a Ceremony of Hope, a gathering of people in the mental health community that celebrated achievements and honored those who provide support. The event featured live music, inspirational speakers, and readings of hope.

**Reference: 1.** Real Men, Real Depression. NIMH Fact Sheet. Available at: <http://menanddepression.nimh.nih.gov/infopage.asp?id=15>.

### INSIDE!

- Meet Charles, a person receiving VNS Therapy
- Ask the doctor
- Antidepressant tip of the month



### Meet Charles, a VNS Therapy patient

In his 20s, when Charles (now 46) was a bond trader in a major Wall Street firm, he never expected to be a shut-in—or the author of a book. But that was before he developed depression, and before his VNS Therapy experience.

“When things were at their worst, I was unable to work. I just stayed home on the living room couch and watched TV.”

Charles’s psychologist mentioned a magazine article about vagus nerve stimulation. He had the implant procedure on April 4, 2001. “I went home from the hospital the day after the procedure, and I thought, ‘I just had a procedure. Shouldn’t I have more pain or more discomfort?’ And within a few days there was no pain or discomfort.”

“The improvement was very, very gradual. Prior to VNS Therapy, everything was a struggle for me; social events, family events, even leaving my house put me under tremendous stress. With each little uptick, I did more, became more confident, and progressed further. Many social events that I could not have attended prior to VNS Therapy I could genuinely enjoy.”



“VNS Therapy was the catalyst for a developing interest in the outside world, computers, and the Internet.” Charles now has his own Web site. In addition, he has written a book about his experiences, *Out of the Black Hole: The Patient’s Guide to Vagus Nerve Stimulation and Depression*.

“My moods now are normal. In other words, if a sad event occurs, I experience normal sadness but I bounce back to my normal mood. I’m optimistic about my future. VNS Therapy has opened up the world to me.”

### Ask a VNS Therapy patient

#### Does the VNS Therapy implant procedure leave a scar?

**Karmen:** The scar healed amazingly fast. It shrank and faded, and if people noticed the scar at all, they assumed I had had another procedure such as a thyroid operation. People do not notice it; my family barely recognizes it.

**Marna:** It didn’t take very long to heal. Now I try to show my scar to people, but it doesn’t work because nobody can acknowledge that they see a scar, so they really are imperceptible.

#### What does VNS Therapy feel like?

**Karmen:** After the procedure, I was unaware that there was a device inside my body. I could not tell. When I first began VNS Therapy, the stimulation was very noticeable to me. But over time it just became a part of me. I compare it to blinking—I just was not aware of the side effects. I no longer think about it or feel it.

**Marna:** When I first began VNS Therapy, I had some side effects, including a raspy voice, especially when we increased the dose of the therapy. We continued to adjust the dose until I virtually have no side effects in my voice now.



### Ask the doctor

**Linda L. Carpenter, MD**, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior; Chief, Mood Disorders Program, Butler Hospital, Brown University Medical School, Providence, RI

#### How does VNS Therapy work?

The vagus nerve is one of the primary communication pathways from the major organs of the body to the brain. VNS Therapy is delivered by a pulse generator (a device like a pacemaker) via thin, flexible wires that apply mild electrical pulses to the vagus nerve in the left side of the neck. The vagus nerve delivers these pulses to specific areas of the brain involved in the regulation of emotions. Stimulating activity in the brain through VNS Therapy is thought to affect the production or activity of neurotransmitters (naturally occurring chemicals) that influence mood, sleep, and appetite.<sup>1</sup>

#### Why do some depressions not respond to medications?

There are many reasons why an antidepressant medication may not relieve symptoms of depression.

- First, the diagnosis may be incorrect. Some medical problems (like thyroid disorders) cause symptoms very similar to those of major depression
- Second, patients with major depression must take an adequate dose of a prescribed antidepressant medication and stay on it for an adequate time—often as long as 8 weeks—before benefits occur
- Some antidepressants or types of antidepressant drugs work better than others for some individuals with depression, so patients may experience relief from one drug even when adequate trials of other drugs didn't help

However, some people get the proper diagnosis, take antidepressant medications at high enough doses, and stay on them for months with minimal or no real relief from their depressive symptoms. In these people, the disorder is considered "treatment-resistant depression." Genetic factors, exposure to stressors at various points of childhood and adult life, and poorly understood biological processes may all contribute to a depression resistant to standard antidepressant medications.

Please see the full indication and safety information enclosed.

**Reference:** 1. Rush AJ, Marangell LB, Sackeim HA, et al. Vagus nerve stimulation for treatment-resistant depression: a randomized, controlled acute phase trial. *Biol Psychiatry*. 2005;58:347-354.

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### Connections: a VNS Therapy resource program for you

- **Brochures**
- **Live phone conferences—VNS Therapy Phone Facts Sessions**
  - Hear from a patient about his or her experience with VNS Therapy
  - Learn about the facts from a psychiatrist experienced with VNS Therapy
    - November 1 and 15, December 6 and 20
    - 7:00 PM Central Time
    - Call TOLL-FREE 1-866-598-9336
- **Nurse case managers who can answer your questions about VNS Therapy and help with insurance coverage**
- For more information, call **1-877-NOW-4VNS** (1-877-669-4867) or visit **www.VNSTherapy.com**

#### Antidepressant tip of the month

Try to maintain your regular schedule over the long Thanksgiving weekend, even if you're traveling or attending parties. And don't forget to exercise when you can and take your medications on schedule.



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## SAFETY INFORMATION FOR THE VNS THERAPY™ SYSTEM\*

### INTENDED USE/INDICATIONS – UNITED STATES

The VNS Therapy System is indicated for the adjunctive long-term treatment of chronic or recurrent depression for patients 18 years of age or older who are experiencing a major depressive episode and have not had an adequate response to four or more adequate antidepressant treatments.

### CONTRAINDICATIONS

The VNS Therapy System cannot be used in patients after a bilateral or left cervical vagotomy. Do not use short-wave diathermy, microwave diathermy, or therapeutic ultrasound diathermy on patients implanted with the VNS Therapy System. Diagnostic ultrasound is not included in this contraindication.

### WARNINGS

This device is a permanent implant. It is only to be used in patients with severe depression who are unresponsive to standard psychiatric management. It should only be prescribed and monitored by physicians who have specific training and expertise in the management of treatment-resistant depression and the use of this device. It should only be implanted by physicians who are trained in surgery of the carotid sheath and have received specific training in the implantation of this device.

Physicians should inform patients about all potential risks and adverse events discussed in the VNS Therapy System *Physician's Manual*, including information that VNS Therapy has not been determined to be a cure for depression. Patients being treated with adjunctive VNS Therapy should be observed closely for clinical worsening and suicidality, especially at the time of VNS Therapy stimulation parameter changes or drug or drug dose changes.

Patients who have pre-existing swallowing, cardiac, or respiratory difficulties (including, but not limited to, obstructive sleep apnea and chronic pulmonary disease) should discuss with their physicians whether VNS Therapy is appropriate for them since there is the possibility that stimulation might worsen their condition. Patients with the VNS Therapy System or any part of the VNS Therapy System implanted should not have full body MRI.

### ADVERSE EVENTS

The most commonly reported ( $\geq 10\%$ ) side effects from stimulation included hoarseness, increased cough, neck pain, dyspnea (shortness of breath), dysphagia (difficulty swallowing), paresthesia (prickling feeling in the skin), and laryngismus (sore throat). The most commonly reported ( $\geq 10\%$ ) side effects from the implant procedure included incision pain, hoarseness, incision site reaction, device site pain, device site reaction, pharyngitis (sore throat), dysphagia, and hypesthesia (numbness).

\*THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS SUMMARY REPRESENTS PARTIAL EXCERPTS OF IMPORTANT PRESCRIBING INFORMATION TAKEN FROM THE PRODUCT LABELING. THE INFORMATION IS NOT INTENDED TO SERVE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR A COMPLETE AND THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE VNS THERAPY SYSTEM, NOR DOES THIS INFORMATION REPRESENT FULL DISCLOSURE OF ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION CONCERNING THE USE OF THIS PRODUCT. (CAUTION: U.S. FEDERAL LAW RESTRICTS THIS DEVICE TO SALE BY OR ON THE ORDER OF A PHYSICIAN.)