Shock Jock

How one man jolted the pain that hobbles 30% of positive people

May 1, 2007 By Laura Whitehorn

After seven years of excruciating pain from HIV-related peripheral neuropathy (PN), Scot Blumstein got another shock last September. He was lounging in his West Palm Beach, Florida, bedroom when “suddenly I realized I felt no pain, no tingling in my feet and legs. The sensation was so foreign,” he says, “I had to stop to figure out what it was.”

Eureka: A radical new treatment, a form of electromagnetic therapy, was working. Three times a week, Blumstein reclines on a massage table as a mild electrical current stimulates his feet and legs. Using what Blumstein describes as “wands and rakes,” clinicians aim polarized impulses at his damaged nerves, repairing them, at least temporarily. The therapy’s creator, Robert Lenox, PhD, says it “reactivates blood flow and oxygenation and closes tears in the sheath around the nerves—like sending a needle through to unclog a stopped-up tube from both ends at once.”

Through 18 years of living with the virus, Blumstein, 46, has taken various HIV meds, including some nukes that cause PN. Switching meds halts PN’s progress but often doesn’t repair the nerve damage. Blumstein says all his doctors can offer for pain are the anticonvulsants Neurontin and Lyrica. But these don’t work well; and massage, though it relaxes him, doesn’t soothe his pulsing nerves. After one doctor told him “this was just something I would have to deal with,” Blumstein plugged into the nearby British Diagnostic Institute for electromagnetic therapy. Similar clinics exist in cities around the U.S.

Like other novel PN pain tactics, such as hypnosis and acupuncture, this method needs study. But positive people—often taking meds only a few years past FDA approval—are used to being test-tube babies.

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