

January 19, 2007

To: Neurological Devices Panel

From: Sherry Brakhane

RE: Treatment of major depressive disorder with rTMS

I am writing you concerning the January 26, 2007 meeting of your panel.

I am a 44 year old female. I was first diagnosed with major depressive disorder in January 2004. Since that time I have tried numerous anti-depressant medications alone or in combination with one another and other medications known to help depression. Either these medications did not work or caused unwanted side effects. After a year and a half of trial and error with these various drugs, my psychiatrist suggested electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). I was not in favor of trying ECT because of the likely side effects and multiple treatments required.

My psychiatrist then suggested an experimental treatment called repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS). He told me the treatments are expensive, not covered by insurance and would be daily for the first four to six weeks. I decided to try rTMS. While there was no immediate improvement, after the first four weeks I began to feel better. We have continued the rTMS treatments now for over a year. To keep my depression in check, a bi-weekly rTMS treatment seems to be the best.

The rTMS treatments have certainly been beneficial for me. There is no anesthesia required as in ECT. The side effects of rTMS (if any) can be a headache rather than short term memory loss that is common with ECT. The rTMS treatment takes 40 – 50 minutes and the patient is able to drive to and from the treatment. This is in sharp contrast to ECT where someone must accompany the patient to and from the treatment and the patient needs at least a day to recover.

The only drawback of rTMS is that the costs of the treatments are not covered by insurance. The high cost of rTMS makes these treatments unavailable for many people still suffering from depression after failed medication trials. It forces many of these same people into ECT as their last chance at feeling better. I believe these same people may benefit from rTMS just as I have.

I look forward to FDA approval for the use of rTMS as a treatment of major depressive disorder and ask that your committee make any recommendations within its power to further this approval process.

I give my permission to post the foregoing on the FDA website.