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M MidWeek

Brain BOOSTER

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Brain BOOSTER

Brain Health Hawai'i staff members include (from left) Dr. Chad Imanaka, Bradley Kuo, Tracy Ingram, Mark Ferri, Dr. Jason Keifer, Jeremy Creekmore, Chandra Lucariello, Dr. Erik Shipley and Sean Nada.

What's on the mind of Dr. Jason Keifer and his team at Brain Health Hawai'i? Optimizing the health and well-being of those struggling with brain fog, dementia and a host of other issues with the help of a neurostimulation process called rTMS.

The brain is an 80-billion-strong orchestra of electrical signals, and when it is in tune, organized and balanced, it feels and functions well, emphasizes Brain Health Hawai'i's Dr. Jason Keifer.

Unfortunately, sleep problems like insomnia, head injuries, infections and other issues can cause brain signal imbalances and disorganization, he adds.

Stepping in to offer

much-needed relief is Keifer — company founder, CEO and medical director — and his team at Brain Health Hawai'i, which has locations in Kāhala, 'Aiea and Hawai'i Kai.

The company utilizes a noninvasive method of neurostimulation called transcranial magnetic stimulation, also known as TMS. It features magnetic energy to activate nerve cells in the brain to improve symptoms.

The TMS equipment used at the company is Food and Drug Administration-approved for depression, OCD and headaches.

"Most people are familiar with TMS for depression — given (that) insurance companies offer coverage for TMS in people with severe depression that is not improving with counseling and medication," explains Keifer.

"We use TMS to help people with depression, and



Angela Keen receives treatment at Brain Health Hawai'i.
PHOTO COURTESY ANGELA KEEN

a personalized version of TMS unique to Brain Health Hawai'i to help people with symptoms from long COVID, concussion, PTSD, anxiety, ADHD, autism, sleep prob-

lems and for memory problems. We are seeing promising results treating people struggling with early signs of dementia," Keifer says. "TMS is noninvasive, and

medication-free. Most of the people we see are looking for a medication-free alternative or not responding to medications.

"In psychiatry and neurology, using medication off-label is common practice. When a medication is deemed safe, doctors frequently suggest trying it off-label when it can be helpful. The same is true for TMS therapy off-label treatment," notes Keifer.

"We have success using TMS off-label for symptoms related to conditions that historically have been difficult to treat," proclaims Keifer. "It really is a blessing to be able to help most of these folks feel and function better."

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The Smart Path To Brain Therapy

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The company is also combining the TMS technology with “brain maps” of each person’s brain activity to personalize the balancing and optimization process for them. Keifer says his company is the only one on O’ahu offering personalized, repetitive TMS (or rTMS) that involves “the use of brain mapping weekly to customize and more precisely dose the treatment.”

By mapping brain activity, he adds, medical professionals can now see its condition.

“If the brain activity is unbalanced or disorganized, we can identify where, treat it and track over time,” according to Keifer.

The company uses a comfortable, light, wireless EEG (electroencephalogram) cap to record brain wave activity, and the process takes a few minutes, he says.

“The method of personalized brain stimulation we can use is lower energy, gentle. We find that being more precise is more important than powerful when it comes to improving brain activity. And because it is gentle, we have been able to help kids as young as 4 years old,” Keifer highlights.

Even athletes, entertainers and other professionals benefit from the treatment, with improved focus and physical performance, Keifer declares.

“Our athletes spend hours a day training every muscle in their body intensively. Personalized brain stimulation and our brain health program are like fitness for the brain,” he shares. “Now these athletes are adding a brain workout to their routine with good results. It makes



Patient Cari Anne Nada (left) wears a cap used for treatment by Keifer.

sense — stronger brain connections are leading to improved physical and mental performance. They report getting to the ‘zone’ easier and more often.”

A physician with a background in internal medicine — as well as child, adolescent and adult psychiatry — Keifer was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska. He trained at University of Southern California and University of California San Diego before moving to Hawai’i in 2004.

He says that he’s always been interested in finding treatment methods that can help people not responding to usual treatment and for those looking for alternatives to medication.

About a decade ago, many of his patients at the time had a history of concussions causing symptoms that were not responsive to medication.

“Also, my son had a really bad concussion when he fell from 4 feet, it was ugly ... Seeing the changes in his emotions and behavior after the concussion ultimately

sped up my search for treatments that could help,” Keifer remembers.

Fortunately, a close friend and colleague in California connected him with a leader in brain stimulation who shared his methods and technology.

“We wanted to bring the best methods to Hawai’i as soon as possible rather than wait for it to arrive 10 years later, and I wanted to find the best treatment for my son’s concussion.

“A couple of our current team members took a leap of faith and left their jobs at the time as we trained and developed the program around personalized rTMS. We cleared out our 6-by-7-foot medical records closet and began treatments — starting with myself, then colleagues, friends and family,” Keifer recalls. “The responses we saw were really good. People consistently reported improved sleep, focus, mood, memory and anxiety. And my son’s post concussive symptoms improved and we got him back healthier and happier.”

In a relatively short period more people came in for sessions, and they referred their friends and family, according to Keifer.

“Seeing how well it worked, we went from one unit in a closet to three systems in a matter of six to 12 months. We are blessed to have a talented team with the shared vision and priority of providing the best, personalized care. It’s because of this team, we have been able to help more,” Keifer adds.

He says that the original vision was about developing and implementing the best brain health program possible for as many people as possible in Hawai’i. Now, the medical practice is currently looking at ways to make sure the outer islands have access in the near future.

As for Keifer, he says that his family — especially wife Nicole — is an ongoing source of inspiration to him.

“My wife continues to support this entire thing, including longer days and weeks than she signed on for. Five years ago, I asked her for two years to develop this program. It’s kind of taken on a life of its own at this point and I’m forever grateful that she continues to support me and the family,” Keifer says. “As much as I’m working, I’m pretty sure she’s the hardest working and most talented person I know. Taking care of everything and our four kids the way she does is special.”

One of the patients who has been helped by Brain Health Hawai’i is Angela Keen, a former local TV news reporter. She became such an admirer of the personalized treatment process that last

February, Keifer hired her as the company’s director of marketing, communications and provider relations.

“I was one of the first in Hawai’i to get COVID. My symptoms started March 6, 2020, before the vaccine and before testing. It lasted eight weeks (and) shortly after I recovered, I developed long COVID,” Keen shares.

According to her, “Long COVID brain issues are very similar to concussion. We share a very similar and parallel struggle with our mind and brain. Inflammation is the obvious culprit.”

Since having per-

sonalized treatments from Keifer, Keen says she now has her life back.

“I’m no longer on any medications for my brain, I have no depression, my sleep is back to normal, I wake up early for the first time in many years now, my memory and my executive function are on point, and life is good,” Keen emphasizes.

She adds, “Things that came back to me that I didn’t realize were gone were my ability to pay attention to my peripheral vision, my ability to focus on conversations in a crowded room and even music sounds much better.”



Good For The Brain

Nationally, Brain Awareness Week is scheduled for March 13-19, which is focused on enthusiasm and support for brain science. With that in mind, Brain Health Hawai’i’s Dr. Jason Keifer has some suggestions about keeping one’s mind in tip-top condition.

Among them, he advises optimizing your sleep window, getting direct sunlight in the morning, avoiding eating and drinking late, daily exercise and healthy relationships.

“Doing your best to check these boxes as much as possible on a daily basis can help you maintain and even improve your brain functioning,” says the company CEO, founder and medical director.

Also important is highlighting the nuances of the noggin.

“Brain health is mental health. Brain health is physical health. Brain health is health,” he declares. “The brain is the most important organ in your body, it controls and regulates every system in your body.”

Finally, he points out that thinking, feeling, reacting, remembering, focusing, running and throwing are all examples of things that rely on electrical signals inside the brain.

“When the brain signals are strong and organized, people feel better and perform better,” Keifer concludes.

For more information, visit brainhealthhawaii.com.