

VAHT helps a trigeminal neuralgia sufferer

by Kate Kunkel, B.A., VAHTP

Since I began practicing Vibroacoustic Harp Therapy® (VAHT) in November 2011, I have had the opportunity to work with several dozen clients. Thanks to a powerful networking group which has helped me tremendously in building a practice, I've been able to help people suffering from tinnitus, MS, cancer and Alzheimer's, and I've even treated someone who was basically cut in half. There are many interesting stories, but I thought that the story of a client with debilitating neurological issues could be of great interest to the readers of *The Harp Therapy Journal*. While I have permission to share her story, I have been asked not to use her real name, so I will share the story of "Alice" in pseudonym.

I use a NexNeuro SL2 lounge, which is specifically designed to conduct the low frequencies [20 - 150 Hz] recommended by Olav Skille and other Vibroacoustic Therapy (VAT) researchers including Suzanne Jonas and Richard Mucci. My Musicmaker's Regency harp (in maple) has a Big Twin pickup which goes through a pre-amp and into a mixer, because I also use recorded frequencies, and sometimes mix them with the harp. The mixer allows me to control very precisely how much of the vibration comes from the recorded frequencies and how much from the harp.

Alice is a 45-year-old Italian-Canadian bookkeeper and mother of three grown children, one of whom is getting married this summer. Alice is a funny, engaging woman who, for the last seven years, has been suffering from trigeminal neuralgia, a nerve disorder that causes a stabbing, electric-shock like pain in parts of the face. It has had an extreme impact on her quality of life, and the fact that the cause is basically unknown* and the treatment options limited made it even more difficult for her to deal with.

When Alice came to me through another client referral, she had blinding pain in her right eye, and the top and back of her head always felt that something was pushing against it. Her throat was slightly constricted and she often had severe headaches behind the eyes. There were many days where the pain and pressure would be so severe, she could not bear to open her eyes, and she was reduced to lying as still as possible, drugged with pain medication that would merely allow her to sleep. Allopathic medicine, which in her case consisted only of pharmaceuticals including pain relievers and Cymbalta, was giving her basically no relief. Alice was advised that, in extreme instances, surgery could be performed, but the record for effectiveness was not great and there was a chance it could make it worse, so Alice was in no way prepared to undergo an operation. So, although Alice was very skeptical, at this point she willing to try anything natural to reduce the pain.

Because I wasn't certain if VAHT would trigger increased pain, I started off very slowly, with the volume very low. Alice could discern vibration from notes as high as the A directly below middle C. She felt it almost immediately in her right eye. When asked if it hurt, she said no, but that it was tingling. I continued very slowly, monitoring her facial expressions constantly. She told me where every note triggered something. Soon she began to relax and I began to improvise, playing gently.

She began to talk about seeing colors as I was playing; first the color green came to her and she calmed down into a much more receptive state. Soon, she was talking about seeing violet and purple, and she said the pressure in the back of her head was decreasing. Then, she put her hand up to her eye and said that the pain was much less.



Kate Kunkel provides VAHT for "Alice"

By the end of the 30-minute session, when she sat up, Alice said that there was no pressure in the back of her head, and that her eye, while still painful, was not stabbing any more. She was very pleased, and set an appointment for the next week. She was delighted and smiling when she left.

When Alice returned the next week, she was back in pain, but reported that, while she had been exhausted for the day after the session, the pain had not come back for three days. She was very hopeful that we would have the same good results, and we did, but an interesting development occurred during the second session.

Alice's head began turning to the right during the session, she said it was like her eye wanted to get closer to the source of the vibration. By the end of the session, she was mostly lying on her right side, her face pressed into the cushion. When she got up, there were tears in her eyes.... she was so relieved that for the first time in as long as she could remember, her eye was not in pain. She left on a very positive note and reported the next week that she had gone almost three days without pain in her eye, and that the pressure in the back of her head had stayed away about four days.

In the third session, because I had just dealt with a stroke victim and was

See VAHT, page 15

VAHT, from page 10

combining VAT and VAHT with great success, I decided to add recorded frequencies to Alice's treatment. On very low volume, I began the session with a recording of an 82 HZ frequency. I chose the 82 HZ based on information from Olav Skille which indicated that frequency was effective for stroke and neurological issues. However, the actual program that I use when combining VAT and VAHT is one that Richard Mucci and I created. It is timed to come in and out in a particular wave form that I find works better with the harp than the Skille program.

I asked Alice to really focus on what was happening as the recorded frequency wove up and down over the lounge. She said it felt like something opening up in the back of her head. She concentrated on the frequency for about five minutes, then I began going through the VAHT protocols. After another five minutes, I stopped the background frequency and continued with the harp alone.

The results were astounding. Again, Alice's head turned to the right, as though her eye was seeking the frequencies, but when the session ended, that's when the fun began. I always have my clients drink low pH water immediately after their sessions to re-hydrate. As usual, Alice began to drink and all of a sudden she clenched her hand to her throat which I must admit scared me a bit. But then she started laughing. She said it was the first time in more than seven years that she could feel water going down her throat. She was ecstatic.

Alice has been coming once per week now for nine weeks, and we have been combining VAT and VAHT for the entire duration of each session. The pain and pressure in her eye stay away for four or five days at a time now. We haven't been able to eliminate it entirely, but she says that even when the pain does come back, it's not nearly as severe as it was and she is never incapacitated. She reports that she is feeling more alive, and much more positive.

For this particular case, it seems that the combination of VAHT and VAT is what has given us the most success. Alice

is also very involved in every step of the session. She is good about reporting to me exactly what she is feeling so that if I'm playing something that is making her feel better, or if she is seeing the colors that she associates with healing, I can continue playing in that vein, with those notes. It helps tremendously to have a client who can communicate what is happening.

We will continue for another three weeks to see how Alice progresses. The short-term goal is to get her from week to week without a recurrence of pain, and then see if we can extend the period of time between sessions. ♥

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*[Editor's note: Some theories suggest that trigeminal neuralgia (a.k.a. tic douloureux) occurs as a result of compression and subsequent demyelination of the trigeminal (5th cranial) nerve. Acupuncture and biofeedback reportedly offer some relief, supporting the notions that improved energetic flow, interrupted impulse transmission along pain pathways, and muscular relaxation — resulting in subsequent nerve decompression may account for some of the potential benefits of VAHT.]

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