

Light at the end of the pain tunnel

A Toorak GP is using low-level laser therapy to treat chronic pain, inflammation and musculoskeletal conditions.

When you're in pain, you want to know there's light at the end of the tunnel.

That's quite literally the hope offered by low-level laser therapy, an affordable and drug-free treatment.

The therapy is widely used overseas and is becoming more popular in Australia, says Dr Shikha Parmar, a Melbourne GP for more than 20 years.

The light used is often referred to as a "cold laser" or "soft laser". Low-intensity laser therapy does not heat, cut or damage the cells.

Parmar says infrared laser, delivered over 15 minutes to areas of the body experiencing pain, will cause a photochemical change in cells, relax muscles and improve blood flow.

As a result of these processes, patients often feel a reduction in their pain levels, restored function and improved quality of life.

Parmar introduced laser therapy to her practice six years ago to treat patients with chronic pain and inflammation.

She says patients report positive changes within two- to three weeks of starting treatment. Parmar says the laser also suppresses pain signals in nerve endings, making it a "pain-free" choice.

Two years ago, Parmar founded Laser Pain Therapy, a Toorak clinic that specialises in low-level laser therapy.



Low-level laser therapy is offered at Melbourne's Laser Pain Therapy.

Her clinic treats cases of bursitis, rotator-cuff injury, tendonitis, neuralgia, and osteoarthritis. Parmar also uses the treatment for strain injuries, degenerative knee conditions, back and neck pain and fall-related injuries.

The therapy is "a finite treatment" and usually ends after 12 or so sessions.

The tissues will continue to heal over ensuing weeks and months because the treatment "results in stimulation and restoration of the body's own immune healing process", she says.

"I do it because it's so rewarding and so successful," she says.

The therapy is particularly effective if it begins soon after the onset of injury, Parmar says. But people who have suffered chronic pain for some time also benefit from the therapy, she says.

"Usually people experience improved function, sleep and quality of life and can better handle the activities of daily living," Parmar says.

Patients experiencing pain or injury should consult a general practitioner for a

thorough diagnosis. They should disclose if there's a likelihood that they're pregnant. Patients should also avoid looking directly into the laser.

Parmar hopes that low-level laser therapy will be offered Australia-wide by health professionals as a primary treatment - one that will be accessible at pain and wound clinics, and at rheumatology and sports-medicine clinics. She also envisages an affordable device that the general public will be able to use at home to treat minor musculoskeletal injuries and joint pain.

SOFT TISSUE MUSCULOSKELETAL MEDICAL CLINIC

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ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM UNRESOLVED INJURIES?
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Low Level Laser Therapy or Photobiomodulation utilises medical grade lasers to effect the break down of inflammation and stimulate tissue healing and repair, painlessly and effectively.

- Bursitis
 - Rotator cuff syndrome
 - Plantar fasciitis
 - Achilles tendonitis
 - Tennis elbow
 - Osteoarthritis
 - Sciatica
 - Neck and back pain
 - Tendonitis
 - Shoulder pain
 - Joint pain
 - Sprains and strains
- and many other musculoskeletal conditions

DR SHIKHA S. PARMAR
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MBChB, DipPaed, DipObs, FRACGP

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