

2013 HEALTH CARE HEROES

INNOVATOR

WINNER: DR. JOHN HAWKINS



Hawkins

Title: Chief of psychiatry, director of transcranial magnetic services

Organization: Lindner Center of Hope

Nominator: Dr. Paul Keck Jr.

Hawkins' mission is to provide the most advanced diagnostics, innovative treatments and research to people with mental illness. His action, research and understanding into the brain's complex wiring have brought about new therapeutic avenues, including transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). This treatment focuses an electromagnetic beam (similar to that used in an MRI) to the left side of the part of the brain affected by depression.

His nominator writes: "As a trend-setter, he was among the first providers in Ohio to offer TMS to treat major depression." To date, 26 individuals have received TMS at the Lindner Center, with 33 percent experiencing complete remission of depression, and 62.5 percent showing at least partial improvement.

What inspired you to pursue a career in health care?

My first influence was my father. I saw him practice as a clinical psychologist, and as I

became older, I was able to realize what a positive impact he had on his patients and the people he worked with.

I originally translated that experience into wanting to become a family practice doctor, but during my undergraduate and medical school training experiences, I became fascinated with the challenge of understanding the biological and psychological underpinnings of human behavior, and so I found myself drawn to the field of psychiatry.

What's been your most rewarding experience on the job?

The best part of my job is when you realize that you help patients and their families discover there is a light at the end of the tunnel and that there is hope.

Frequently, when one first seeks treatment for a psychiatric disorder, it is a terrifying and confusing experience, and the illness leaves the affected person in a terribly disabled state. I am able to provide treatments and tools that provide symptomatic relief from their suffering and, over time, they can return to leading productive and happy lives.

The opportunity to be a part of a team that developed and now leads the clinical and operational functions of the Lindner Center of Hope, whose sole mission is to provide high-quality mental health servic-

es, has opened the door to having these rewarding experiences happen in many more ways than I could have imagined possible.

What would you still like to accomplish?

I hope to be able to expand the number of ways we can use transcranial magnetic stimulation technology to provide treatments of other psychiatric disorders (post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder) along with being able to show its utility in special treatment populations such as adolescents and women who are suffering from depression during or after pregnancy.

I also hope to be able to be a part of a team that is able to bring future treatment technologies to the Lindner Center of Hope.

If you could change one thing about our health care system, what would it be?

It would be to help our governments, third-party payers and large hospital systems realize both their moral obligations and the unrealized financial value of providing quality and humane mental health care services to our friends and family... The more we devalue the importance of treating serious mental illnesses by how we treat these folks in our systems or block access to their care, the more we contribute to the problem.