

'Brain pacemaker' debuts in UAE

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Pacemakers for the brain that help ease tremors suffered by people with Parkinson's disease are to be made available in the UAE for the first time, it was announced in Monday.

The new technology called Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) is being introduced to Dubai Healthcare City (DHCC) in collaboration with the University of Cologne and the German Centre for Neurology and Psychiatry (GNP) in Dubai.

Treatment with a DBS brain pacemaker can help patients with severe movement disorders, such as those with Parkinson's, who are no longer adequately controlled by drug therapy, a statement from DHCC said.

The principle is similar to the better known heart pacemaker, where electrical current is applied via implanted electrodes, stimulating the nerve tissue.

Bringing DBC to Dubai will allow the DHCC to carry out combined research with the German pioneers, as well as being able to offer patients access to the implantation surgery and pre and post operative care in the emirate, or in Germany when necessary.

Speaking at GNP's clinic, Dr Utako Barnikol, faculty member and part of the DBS team at the University of Cologne said: "Deep brain stimulations have been carried out in the emirates on several occasions with expertise flying in, but there has never been an established standard practice for sufferers here.

"Our first goal is the translational work, where concentrated knowledge about novel therapies will be transferred to GNP in Dubai. Through this it will very soon be possible to help patients presenting for these novel treatments," Dr Barnikol said.

GNP's Dr Arne Brosig added: "This is very much a last resort technique, as it is a very complex neurosurgery, but it can be incredibly effective and, with the new and improved techniques, results have been even more successful. As a result, I expect huge demand here in the UAE where this has not been readily available."

In Germany over 20,000 patients suffering from Parkinson's have been treated using DBS, with many going from being almost completely handicapped to leading a reasonable normal life.

Many other conditions can also be treated using DBS, including dystonia, chronic pain, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Tourettes Syndrome and various addictions.

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