

Medical marvel

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Dr. Ali Rezai of the Cleveland Clinic is one of the experts quoted in a *New York Times* [story](#) that says scientists have reversed some of the worst symptoms of Parkinson's disease by electrically stimulating the spinal cords of rodents.

The therapy from researchers at Duke, described in Friday's issue of the journal *Science*, "is a potential alternative to direct stimulation, which requires risky and invasive surgery to implant electrodes deep in the brain," *The Times* reports. Only about 30% of severely impaired Parkinson's patients qualify for the operation.

Dr. Rezai, a neurosurgeon and director of the Center for Neurological Restoration at the Clinic, tells *The Times* that spinal cord stimulation is "technically simple to do" and has been performed on tens of thousands of people to treat chronic pain, spasticity, stroke and other medical problems. The main side effect, he says, is a sense of vibration, like pins and needles, that never lets up.

The idea of using spinal cord stimulation to treat Parkinson's disease, however, is entirely new, Dr. Rezai says, according to *The Times*. He calls it both "provocative" and "fascinating," though he says further research is needed on how it would work in practice.

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